

**UNDERSTANDING ETHNIC
VIOLENCE:
THE 2007-2008 POST-ELECTION CRISIS
IN KENYA**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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2012

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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STATEMENT 1

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Abstract

The field of ethnic conflict studies is dominated by top-down approaches and elite-centric analyses that emphasise the social construction of group grievances, fears and hatreds, and that highlight the central role played by political entrepreneurs in the manipulation of ethnicity and the organisation of violence. Whilst offering valuable explanations of the macro-context of conflict, existing theories obscure local level agency and oversimplify the nature and dynamics of violence on the ground. The aerial perspective creates the illusion of homogenous ethnic groups waging battle along a clearly defined and stable cleavage line, and it fails to account for localised manipulations of, and individualised resistance to, the macro-ethnic divide.

This thesis offers a view of violence from below, complexifying, problematising, and nuancing existing theories through a close-grained, thick descriptive analysis of a particular case. A detailed ethnographic exploration of the localised dimensions of the 2007-2008 post-election crisis in Kenya reveals socio-spatial variations in violence dynamics, as well as localised and individualised contradictions in involvement and participation, that are not easily explained by the dominant perspective. It argues that territories with a clear ethnic majority experienced more intense violence than ethnically mixed spaces, which remained relatively calm and demonstrated greater levels of inter-ethnic cooperation. It further highlights the ambiguities of individual involvement, arguing that local level actors can transcend the meta-narrative of ethnic animosity for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways.

The thesis concludes that cases of ethnic conflict are not marked by singularity and uniformity, but rather by multi-vocality and complexity. They are not coherent and singular conflicts but rather are constituted by multiple locally-ethnicised clashes. Thus, the thesis contributes to the broader project of generating more comprehensive and representative understandings of ethnic violence by exploring the localised processes of identity production and negotiation in the Kenyan case.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and assistance of a number of people, and it is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to them here.

My deepest thanks undoubtedly go to the five supervisors who have played an important part in this project. They have each helped me at different stages of the thesis and in their own unique ways. I thank Rita Abrahamsen for inspiring me at the outset, and Richard Jackson for challenging and encouraging me in equal measure for three years. Richard pointed me in the right direction when I needed it, whilst allowing me the freedom to follow my own ideas, and I am deeply grateful for his guidance. I thank Jenny Mathers and Patrick Finney for adopting a final year PhD student and for supporting me through the last stages. Jenny's ever-calming presence and detailed comments, and Patrick's sound advice and encouragement were invaluable and greatly appreciated. I cannot overstate my gratitude to Richard Rathbone. I have cherished his assistance and support, which continued even after his retirement, and I am forever grateful for it. He gave me confidence in my ideas, was always willing to read whatever rubbish I sent his way – day or night, rain or shine – and his thoughtful insights continually make me think about things in different ways. I would truly have been lost without him, and I consider him to be not only a great mentor, but also a great friend. So, to all of my supervisors: because of your encouragement and support, I had the freedom and confidence to write the thesis I set out to write – 'Thanks' is too small a word.

I am grateful for the funding from the University of Aberystwyth which has enabled me to pursue this research, and the International Politics Department has provided a rich, lively and engaging environment in which to do so. The members of staff and the postgraduate community have contributed immensely to my time in Aberystwyth, both personally and academically, and I thank them for it. The numerous research groups, workshops and seminars broadened my knowledge and helped me to develop my ideas, and the sense of community and camaraderie in the department was invaluable. Special mention should go to

the support staff who have helped reduce the potential catastrophes of my own administrative ineptitude, and without whom this thesis might never have materialised. I would like especially to thank everyone from my PhD cohort – they have been a great source of advice, support, and most importantly, of friendship. Clare Paine, Megan Daigle, Lisa Denney, Jen Bagelman, Halle O’Neal and Andy Hom in particular have made my PhD experience far more enjoyable than I could ever have imagined and I am glad I was able to share the ups and downs with them. So, thank you for the coffees, the teas, the wine, the games, the bike rides, the picnics, the walks and above all the laughter – I cherish our friendship, and without you all I would very likely have had a breakdown long ago!

The fieldwork upon which this thesis is based would not have been possible without the assistance of everyone at the British Institute in East Africa, Nairobi. They rendered the bureaucracy of research permits and visa applications completely painless and I would not have known where to begin without their advice and organisation. I express my sincere gratitude to them for this. Moreover, they made me feel very welcome and at home whilst I was still finding my feet in Kenya and very kindly provided me with a graduate assistant to help me with my archival research when I realised I had bitten off more than I could chew. Jessica Petts’ careful and thorough cataloguing of the newspaper sources is acknowledged here, and I thank her for throwing herself so whole-heartedly into what was undoubtedly a laborious task. Finally some of the fellow researchers I met whilst at the British Institute became great friends, and provided much-needed support. I thank Jess, Hannah, Leila, Darren and Patience in particular and I have fond memories of our trips to *Habeshas*, our *Tusker* beer outings, our movie nights, our homemade dinners and our general living-room chats. Thanks to you all.

My time spent in Kenya was one of the greatest and most fulfilling periods of my life and I am so thankful to everyone I met there. There are too many people who deserve mention here, and unfortunately the need for anonymity prevents me from naming even just a few. However, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all my local assistants who made the research possible, and to all the people who welcomed me into their friendship groups and allowed me just to hang out day after day. They patiently answered my never-ending questions and were a great source of information. More than this, however, many of them became very close friends and they made my field experience thoroughly enjoyable. I owe

perhaps the greatest debt to my assistant who stuck with me from the very first day I stepped into Kibera until my very last day in Kenya, ten months later; I express my deepest gratitude and affection for him here. His hard work, intelligence, and advice made the research more successful than I had dreamed it could be, and his sense of humour and fun personality filled the days with laughter and joy – I am so lucky to have stumbled across his path. Eternal thanks and love must also go to his sister for getting me started, and to the rest of his family for their care, as well as to the two Kenyan families in Nakuru and Eldoret who gave me a home away from home. They all welcomed me into their lives with an openness and an affection I had not expected, and made me feel like a sister, a daughter, and a friend almost immediately. Lastly, my interviewees are, and have always been, at the heart of this thesis and I cannot thank them enough for giving up their time and telling me their stories. Without their willingness and openness to discuss a difficult time in their lives, this thesis would never have been written. So to my Kenyan friends and family: *Asante sana rafiki zangu. Nakufikiria kila siku na ninatumaini kwamba tutaonana tena.* And to my interviewees: I am so honoured and grateful to have met each and every one of you and to have heard your stories – I can only hope that I have done some justice to them here. It is to all of you that I dedicate this thesis.

Finally, my greatest thanks must go to my own family – my parents and my brother. I could not possibly list the ways in which they have helped me, supported me and pushed me over the years, and I could never put into words what they mean to me. So I say only this: thank you for being you, and simply for being there.

Abbreviations

AIC	Africa Inland Church
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIPEV	Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence
CKRC	Constitution of Kenya Review Commission
ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
FORD-Kenya	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy
GEMA	Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association
GSU	General Service Unit
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KACC	Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAMATUSA	Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu Association
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KICC	Kenya International Conference Centre
KHRC	Kenya Human Rights Commission
KKK	Kikuyu, Kamba, Kalenjin alliance
KNCHR	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAK	National Alliance of Kenya

NCCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NDP	National Development Party
NDC	National Democratic Congress (Ghana)
OCS	Officer Commanding Station
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
PNU	Party of National Unity
TJRC	Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission

Introduction

At 3.30am on Thursday, 27 December 2007, OT,¹ a Luo youth from Mathare in Nairobi, awoke. Leaving his home and stepping out into the darkness of the slum, he went to join the already-lengthy queues at a nearby primary school to cast his vote in Kenya's fourth General Elections since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992. The atmosphere was one of optimism and expectation. Just three days later, however, the mood had changed completely. After an election-day that had been riddled with irregularities, a visible bungling of the counting process and a significant delay to the announcement of the presidential results, and amidst pervasive rumours of rigging and malpractice, OT's hopes for the assured victory of his preferred candidate, fellow Luo Raila Odinga, the leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), were fading fast. Just before 6pm on Sunday, 30 December, he and his friends watched the TV in horror as Mwai Kibaki, the Kikuyu candidate for the Party of National Unity (PNU), was announced as the winner of the presidential election, and soon after was sworn into office in a private ceremony at State House. OT exclaimed, 'Those Kikuyu have stolen from us!' and grabbing their machetes, *rungus*,² and other crude weapons the group went outside 'to find where those Kikuyu are.' OT recalls that within a few minutes, 'we found a Kikuyu // and we cut him to death, slashing him with our machetes.' In the weeks that followed, he and his friends, along with other residents of the 4B neighbourhood, looted the properties of Kikuyu living in area, chased them away from the vicinity, destroyed their homes and engaged in fierce battles with groups from neighbouring villages. The fighting continued until a power-sharing agreement was brokered between the

¹ To protect the anonymity of my interviewees, throughout this thesis I refer to them using codes based upon their initials, nicknames or – where interviewees were reluctant to tell me their names – upon some other distinguishing feature. Any names which do appear have been altered.

² A wooden club.

two principals under the mediation of Kofi Annan on 28 February 2008 (OT, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 9 May 2010).

Further upcountry, in Kenya Service, a small peri-urban centre situated on the outskirts of Eldoret town, C, a Borana youth, tells a very different story. He explains that on 29 December, the day before the announcement, Kenyans had awoken to find Kibaki, who had previously been trailing Raila by a significant margin in the count, unexpectedly in the lead.³ Later that day, C heard noise coming from the surrounding hills. He and other residents of the village came out of their homes and looked up to the neighbouring areas to see smoke rising in the distance and houses being burned, ‘so we youths from our centre, we decided to join together to unite to protect the community from dangers.’ C explains that members of the Luo, Luhya, Kikuyu, Kamba, Kisii, Kalenjin, and other communities living in the area – communities who were perceived to be on opposing sides of the political divide⁴ – joined together to help protect each other from external attack. Members of ODM-affiliated communities reassured their Kikuyu neighbours, ‘we told them not to be afraid, but to join hands with us.’ He recalls that one day during the violence they noticed a group of Kikuyu from a neighbouring village, Munyaka, launching an attack on the nearby farm of a Kalenjin friend. In response, they called for the support of Kalenjin warriors, and they went to ‘rescue’ the farm, chasing the Kikuyu away. Despite the ferocity of the fighting in neighbouring villages and across the country, Kenya Service itself remained relatively calm throughout the crisis, and members of supposedly ‘rival’ communities united together across the political

³ A detailed account of the sequence of events surrounding the elections and the counting process is provided in Chapter Six. However, it should be noted here that Raila Odinga had initially enjoyed a commanding lead over Kibaki. As votes from PNU strongholds came in, the gap quickly closed. While C is mistaken in his recollection that Kibaki was already in the lead by Saturday morning, it is fair to say that Raila no longer held a convincing lead by this point, and tensions were beginning to rise.

⁴ There were three major parties in the 2007 elections: the PNU party, led by Kibaki, ODM, led by Raila, and ODM-Kenya led by Kalonzo Musyoka, a Kamba. As shall be discussed in Chapter Five, voting in Kenya is often assumed to operate along ethnic lines, and as such, groups are expected to be affiliated with the party in which their leading politician resides. Consequently, the Kikuyu, and sometimes the Kisii were largely understood to be PNU supporters, the Kalenjin, Luo and, to a lesser degree, the Luhya were recognised as ODM fans, and the Kamba were perceived as favouring ODM-Kenya.

and ethnic divide in order to protect their homes and properties (C, Interview, Kenya Service, 12 February 2010).

These two different stories of the Kenyan post-election violence raise a series of questions and puzzles that warrant further attention. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, is the question of what drives ordinary people like OT and his friends to kill. What makes them turn on their neighbours in such a brutal fashion? How do we explain mass participation in such intimate violence? This is a problem which has perplexed scholars for a long time; it has attracted a wealth of attention, and yet still remains a 'major puzzle' in the story of ethnic violence (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 846). This thesis joins the mass of explorations of this problem. However, it also seeks to move beyond the question of *why* people kill in order to address other perplexities such as *who* they kill, *where* and *when*. Why did OT chase some Kikuyu away and kill others? Did he behave differently towards friends and people he knew well than he did towards strangers and people against whom he had a grudge? Why did the Kikuyu, Luo, Kalenjin, Kisii and Kamba youths of C's village unite together when elsewhere members of their respective communities were engaged in bitter fighting? Why did some neighbourhoods remain relatively calm and peaceful while others descended into spirals of hatred and revenge? Furthermore, C's story of the battle over the Kalenjin farm suggests that what appears to be violence between ethnically homogeneous groups, might in actual fact be far more complex. In that particular incident Kikuyu were fighting against Kikuyu, having united with their 'enemy', the Kalenjin. How do we explain this, and what implications does it have for our understanding of 'ethnic conflict'? All of this leads to one overarching question: what does ethnic violence really look like at the local level and how can we explain it? This question is of fundamental importance. Ill-conceived, misleading, or overly simplified understandings of the nature of ethnic violence and the way in which ethnicity operates, can lead to inadequate resolution strategies and ineffective reconciliation efforts.

Research Questions and Objectives

With these puzzles and problems in mind, the central research question driving this thesis is: *What were the local level dynamics of violence during the 2007-2008 post-election crisis in Kenya, and how can they be understood?* The thesis is concerned with identifying the processes, patterns and acts of ethnic mobilisation and violence on the ground – that is the who, how, when, where, what and why of conflict – and with understanding their logic and rationale. The chapters are framed around a series of sub-questions: *What is the social and political context of ethnicity and violence? How are everyday social and political events understood and interpreted by local level actors? How did the violence start? What did the violence look like on the ground? Who was involved and in what ways? How is the violence understood and framed by those who witnessed and participated in it?*

The thesis, then, aims to generate a ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973), to situate a particular episode of ethnic violence within its social, economic, cultural and political context; primarily, its aim is to create a logic of understanding, a ‘catharsis of comprehension’ (Plummer, 2001, 247) regarding participation in the Kenyan post-election violence at the local level. As such the thesis makes an original contribution to the literature emerging in the wake of the Kenyan crisis.

However, the project has broader objectives than this, and is intended to speak to theories of ethnic violence beyond the Kenyan context. That is to say, Kenya is used as a critical case study for evaluating, problematising and developing existing explanations of ethnic conflict. As shall be highlighted in Chapter One, the field of ethnic conflict studies is dominated by macro-level perspectives and top-down analyses. These approaches have much to offer to an understanding of ethnic violence and this thesis serves, in part, as an evaluation

of their applicability to the Kenyan case. However, a close-grained analysis of events and processes at the micro-level reveals a more nuanced, complex and ambiguous picture, highlighting the limitations of dominant theorising and challenging some of the existing assumptions about ethnic identification processes and the nature of ethnic violence.

Research Design and Methods

Firmly situated within an interpretivist paradigm, with the objectives of generating a thick descriptive account of the Kenyan crisis and of constructing a view of ethnic violence from below, I have employed qualitative techniques and adopted an ethnographic methodology for this research. The arguments presented are based upon fieldwork carried out in Kenya between October 2009 and August 2010, during which time 533 interviews were conducted with residents of urban slums and peri-urban centres surrounding the larger towns of Nairobi, Eldoret and Nakuru. These broad field sites were chosen not only because they were ‘hot-spots’ of the violence, but also because they displayed some diversity and variation both in violence dynamics and in ethnic composition. Within each of these locations, smaller sub-locations were selected in order to focus the research, and all interviewees were residents of these areas. My interviewees included a wide range of people, from unemployed youths and university students, to village elders and local councillors, the only criteria for their selection being that they were resident in the field site during the events of 2007 and early 2008, and thus had personal experience of the campaigns, the elections and the violence in the area. Interviews were narrative in style and respondents were asked to tell their personal stories, describing their experiences of and involvement in the campaigns, the elections and the aftermath. Questions related to each individual narrative were then combined with more general ones designed to elicit views on the nature of ethnicity, politics, violence and society

in Kenya. Interview material is supplemented by newspaper sources, governmental reports, human rights documents and participant observation. The methodological issues, strengths, weaknesses and limitations, as well as the ethical challenges of this fieldwork, are extensively discussed in Chapter Two.

Scope and Limitations

As Fujii (2009a: 21) has pointed out, ‘no study can hope to explain all the complexities of a single phenomenon’ and I certainly do not make any such grand claim here. This thesis neither provides a complete picture of the intricacies of the Kenyan situation, nor does it seek to offer an alternative, comprehensive theory of ethnic violence. Each field site exhibited its own peculiar dynamics of violence, and there are significant variations in the timing of onset, the actors involved, the intensity, the levels of organisation and direction, as well as the mix of objectives and rationales underscoring participation. The ethnicised land conflicts of Mt Elgon, for example, are undoubtedly markedly different from the landlord/tenant undertones of violence in Nairobi. Similarly, the dynamics of the pre-election violence that rocked Molo and Kuresoi cannot speak to the specifics of the post-election violence in Mombasa or Kisumu. Moreover, at an even greater level of disaggregation, this thesis cannot explain why some individuals seemingly take pleasure in chaos, while others avoid it at all costs. However, the thesis does aim to highlight the limitations of existing assumptions about the phenomenon of ethnic conflict, to identify the variations in violence dynamics in a particular case, and to understand the logic behind some of these patterns. In doing so, the thesis illustrates the important insights that a close-grained, micro-level perspective can offer, pointing to localised processes of ethnic identification and

mobilisation, and to the complexities and ambiguities of ‘ethnic violence’ that might speak to other contexts.

Key Terms and Definitions

There are two key terms which are used throughout the thesis that warrant some explication at this stage. The first is the slippery concept of ‘ethnicity.’ Despite the attention it has received, ‘ethnicity’ has eluded an authoritative definition, prompting some scholars to doubt that one is even possible (Vaughan 1996: 358). The understanding of ethnicity that underpins this thesis is situated within the broader cognitive turn in the literature (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004: 64); ethnicity is recognised ‘as a perspective on the world, not a thing in the world.’ (Brubaker et al. 2006: 169). That is to say, it is a lens through which people interpret everyday events, and categorise and define their relationships with others. It is a socialised disposition which is shaped by, and in turn shaping of, everyday practices and behaviours. Chapter Three delves into a more comprehensive discussion of the complex workings of ethnicity in Kenya on the ground, and I employ Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of habitus as a loose framework for this conceptualisation of ethnicity. Such a perspective allows for a certain stability to ethnic identity – that is for the perception of a bounded ethnic group with clear, if not consistent, rules of membership – whilst acknowledging its potential for change, contestation and transformation. As Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov (2004: 64-65) state, this understanding of ethnicity provides ‘resources for avoiding analytical “groupism” – the tendency to treat ethnic groups as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed – while helping to explain the tenacious hold of groupism in practice.’

The second term which requires some qualification is 'local level actors.' This phrase is used frequently throughout the thesis to refer to 'ordinary' Kenyan citizens. That is to say, those who are not members of the political elite. Undoubtedly, this is an artificial distinction. Local councillors, for example, usually straddle the lines between 'political elite' and 'local level actor.' However, I use the term to refer to anyone resident in the areas in which violence took place and, as such, who is intimately involved in the everyday production of identity and in the local processes of violence.

Organisation

The thesis begins by exploring the role of ethnicity and conflict in everyday life in Kenyan society, moving towards a detailed examination of the 2007 elections and their violent aftermath in subsequent chapters.

Chapter One offers a review of the key theories of ethnic violence, arguing that macro-level perspectives, top-down approaches and elite-centric analyses have come to dominate the field. While these existing theories offer valuable insights into the phenomenon, they are limited by their aerial perspective, masking the ambiguities of local level identification processes and the complexities of participation in ethnic violence on the ground.

Chapter Two explores the methodological and ethical challenges of ethnographic research in a post-conflict divided society. Through an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of my own fieldwork, this chapter contributes to the important and growing literature that both engages with the practicalities of conducting research on the empirical dynamics of violence at the grassroots, and develops strategies for negotiating difficult field settings.

Chapter Three examines the processes of identity construction in contemporary Kenyan society and explores the ways in which ethnicity operates in everyday life. It argues that far from being a latent or dormant identity, ethnicity is rather continually produced, reinforced and transformed by local level actors in their day to day lives. Moreover, ethnicity colours everyday interactions and operates as a prominent lens through which to understand the social world.

Chapter Four examines the ethnicised prejudices, tensions and conflicts which underscore everyday consciousness and relationships in Kenyan society, and it locates the post-election crisis in a context of diffused and normalised violence. It argues that large-scale incidents of violence should be understood as part of a continuum of conflictual behaviours, in which the patterns and logics are visible in periods of relative peace.

Chapter Five analyses the micro-dynamics of political behaviour in Kenya, exploring the extent to which ethnicity defines the relationship between elites and local level actors, and examining how violence is employed in political campaigns to secure support. It argues that localised socio-spatial dynamics can either play a significant role in enabling vibrant political debate across ethnic lines, or can significantly constrain individual agency through the punishment of non-conformity to ethnic expectations.

Chapter Six traces the transitions from the ‘banality’ of everyday ethnicity and the low level conflicts of ‘peacetime’ to the polarisation of the 2007 campaigns, and it highlights the ways in which the elections acted as a trigger for widespread violence. It argues that bottom-up processes interacted with, and operated independently from, top-down manipulation in the construction of ethnic animosity, and that they are intimately related to the practices of ethnicity and conflict in everyday life.

Chapter Seven closely examines the local level dynamics of violence, and analyses the logic underscoring the complex, ambiguous and seemingly contradictory role of ethnicity

in motivations for, and participation in, acts of violence. It argues that socio-spatial dynamics influence and shape the behaviour of local level actors in violence and illustrates the multi-vocality of the 'ethnic group' on the ground.

The Conclusion summarises the main lines of argument and draws out the broader lessons from the specifics of the Kenyan case. It points to the socio-spatial variations of the post-election violence, arguing that they can be understood in relation to everyday processes of identity production and negotiation by local level actors, as well as to the profusion of ethnic frictions, tensions and prejudices in day to day life. It draws attention to the multi-vocality of the crisis and argues that these findings have implications beyond the Kenyan context. The dominant understanding of ethnic conflict as being fought along clearly defined cleavage lines is misleading, and the top-down perspective masks the fluidity and flexibility of ethnic animosity at the local level.

Chapter One:

Macro-level Stories of Ethnic Violence: A Review of the Literature

Introduction

The large, diffuse and labyrinthine literature that explores the problem of ethnic violence spans a wide array of disciplines. It is both confused and confusing and is marked by an inconsistent characterisation of the different strands of thought, forcing ‘new entrants... each time to reinvent the wheel’ (Chandra 2001: 11). Traditionally, scholars of both ethnicity and ethnic violence have divided the field into three broad schools of thought: primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism.¹ Primordialist accounts are generally said to assume natural, given, fixed and essential identities based upon ineffable emotional ties, and, consequently, to explain ethnic violence as the result of inevitable and enduring animosities and hatreds inherent within cultural difference;² instrumentalists are characterised as equating ethnic identities with political and economic interest groups,³ and explaining violence as the result of the rational pursuit of power, wealth and privilege on the part of political elites; and constructivists are seen to explore the historical and social construction of flexible, fluid and malleable identities, and to explain violence as the product of reconstructed destructive identity boundaries, often at the hands of political entrepreneurs. However, this reading of the

¹ Some scholars see a clear distinction between instrumentalism and constructivism (for example, Varshney 2002) – asserting that the former focuses more upon individual choice and rational action, and the latter upon social, economic and political processes – whilst others conflate the two under the ‘circumstantialist’ umbrella (for example, Gil-White 2001). This is just one minor example of the theoretical confusion that pervades the field.

² This is arguably the most caricatured and misrepresented school of thought. Even the classic primordialist texts (Shils 1957; Geertz 1973; Isaacs 1975) often acknowledge that identities are constructed at some point in time, that ineffability is *attributed* to affective ties, not *given*, and that identities are the product of socialisation and internalisation. Moreover, they acknowledge that identities are susceptible to change over time. Indeed, Van den Berghe (1981) is arguably alone in his suggestion that ethnic nepotism is fundamentally biological.

³ Bates (1974), Cohen (1974), and Glazer and Moynihan (1975) are the most prominent scholars associated with this argument.

field is fast losing its value. Not only does it obscure the substantial overlap between these schools of thought, but it also masks the diversity within them. Furthermore, it is normatively-loaded, and accounts which are subjected to the primordialist label are often dismissed out of hand, with insufficient attention given to the richness of some of their ideas (Connor 2004: 31). Indeed, while it is certainly not uncommon for scholars of ethnic conflict to begin their analyses by setting themselves in explicit opposition to primordialist arguments, and by (quite rightly) eschewing the supposedly related ‘ancient hatreds’ theory of violence (see for example, Lake and Rothchild 1996: 41; Kaufman 2001: 3-4; Toft 2003: 7-8; Gagnon 2004: 5-6; Straus 2006: 18-23), they are, in many ways, imagining and battling against a virtually non-existent enemy.⁴ Constructivist thought is all but unchallenged in contemporary scholarship. Despite this dominance, however, there is an increasing sense of dissatisfaction with a tired, ‘complacent’ and ‘clichéd’ constructivism (Brubaker et al. 2006: 7), rife with its own inconsistencies, contradictions and lacunae.⁵ In this overview I argue that there is a profusion of macro-level perspectives, top-down approaches, and elite-centric analyses within the literature. This aerial view not only obscures the realities, complexities and ambiguities of local level participation in violence and the processes of ethnic identification and mobilisation on the ground, but it also creates the illusion of neatly bounded and homogeneous groups waging battle against each other. Further research which explores how identities are constructed, produced and reproduced at the grassroots, and how these processes influence the contours and dynamics of violence, is much needed.

⁴ Robert Kaplan (1994) is the most frequently cited proponent of this ‘ancient hatreds’ theory of conflict, but Huntington’s (1996) notion of a ‘clash of civilisations’, and Kakar’s (1996) psychoanalytic approach to violence between Hindus and Muslims in India, demonstrate similar sentiments of essentialised groups, bound to be in inevitable conflict by virtue of their cultural difference. Nevertheless, scholars are hard-pressed to find similar explanations of ethnic violence within the academic literature, and the advocates of this caricatured position tend to be confined to journalistic and policy making circles, where they do, unfortunately, remain prolific.

⁵ Others have expressed dissatisfaction with the field, most notably, Fearon and Laitin (2000); Gil-White (1999, 2001); and Kalyvas (2008).

The Social Construction of Identity

That ethnic identities are socially constructed ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983), the product of historical, political, economic and social processes, is largely undisputed in contemporary theorising. Fredrik Barth’s (1969) influential essay in his edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, is widely regarded as pioneering this constructivist school of thought. His work shifted attention away from the inward-looking primordialist position, with its emphasis on natural, fixed, emotive attachments and ineffable affective ties, towards the importance of social interaction in delineating ethnic groups, noting that it is ‘the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses’ (Barth 1969: 15).⁶ Subsequent analyses in the field of nationalism studies are frequently highlighted as key texts in furthering and exploring this branch of thought. Amongst these, Ernest Gellner’s (1983) argument that national identity is the unintended product of widespread literacy and social mobility associated with modernisation, and economic growth, and Benedict Anderson’s (1983) notion of an ‘imagined community’ made possible by the dual emergence of capitalism and print technology, are the most prominent. However, a rich body of literature identifying the ‘invention of tradition’ and the ‘creation of tribalism’ on the African continent was simultaneously emerging, and similarly discrediting, the previously assumed longevity and primordality of ethnic identities. These theories suggested that the ‘complex and ever-changing social landscape’ (Soja 1968: 13) of the pre-colonial period, characterised as it was by multiple, fluid, flexible, and amorphous social networks and overlapping, mutable loyalties, was fundamentally transformed by colonial rule. It is suggested in this school of thought that European administrative policies and practices of divide and rule, in association

⁶ While Barth is most frequently credited with changing the trajectory of thought on identity, his work owes much to that of his predecessors, notably Edmund Leach (1954) and Michael Moerman (1965) who observed that there is little evidence of a covariance between culture and ethnic groups, and that delineation tends to be subjective rather than objective. Moerman (1965: 1219), for example, concluded that in Thailand, a Lue is only a Lue ‘by virtue of calling himself Lue’ and not by any objective cultural criteria.

with the active participation of, and strategic collaboration by, African intellectuals, elites and local culture brokers, created rigid ethnic identities with distinct, reified customs and traditions (Southall 1970; Lonsdale 1977; Iliffe 1979; Ranger 1983). That is, colonial authorities, with limited resources and personnel, came to rely upon tribal leaders with whom they could work, and through whom they could rule, often creating entirely new ethnic groups in the process. John Iliffe's (1979: 324) summarisation of this position has become an infamous articulation of the position:

Africans wanted effective units of action just as officials wanted effective units of government... Europeans believed Africans belonged to tribes; Africans built tribes to belong to.

The creation of a centralised colonial state thus brought emerging and previously isolated groups into competition for the same politico-economic resources,⁷ and since the provincial administration became the conduit through which these resources could be accessed, Africans were encouraged to 'invest in their relationships with "ethnic" leaders' (Lynch 2011: 15). Furthermore, the uneven penetration of capitalism and the unequal distribution of resources created new systems of stratification (Bates 1974: 462), and notions of 'advanced' and 'backward' communities (Horowitz 1985: 147-149), as some groups benefited disproportionately while others were left behind. The combination of these factors accentuated intergroup rivalry and political competition, and further embedded a consciousness of ethnic identity and difference.

In the wake of these observations, scholars devoted attention to exploring this supposed construction of ethnic identities at the hands of colonial administrators,

⁷ Conflictual modernization theories argued that as groups were brought into the same politico-economic arena, awareness of difference would be heightened and there would be intense competition for the scarce resources of modernity, potentially leading to conflict. Scholars putting forward arguments within this broad field of study include Melson and Wope (1970), Bonacich (1972), Bates (1974), Young (1976) Olzak and Nagel (1986), Olzak (1992), Connor (1994). For a detailed discussion and critique of these theories, see Horowitz (1985: 99-135), Newman (1991), and Belanger and Pinard (1991).

missionaries and ethnographers, in collaboration with African elites (see for example, Vail 1989; Peel 1989; Ranger 1989; Lonsdale 1992; Willis 1992; Chimhundu 1992; Rathbone 1997; van den Bersselaar 2005). Largely as a result of the evidence amassed through these studies, the argument has come to be subjected to a number of criticisms and modifications, as scholars have recognised the limitations and deficiencies inherent in the language of inventionism (Ranger 1993; Lentz and Nugent 2000; Spear 2003). The three major branches of attack are: that the term ‘invention’ implies, rather implausibly, that ethnicity was ‘plucked from the air or created out of nothingness’ (Atkinson 1999: 30), failing to appreciate any continuity between pre-colonial and colonial identities; that it attributes too much power to colonial authorities (Vail 1989: 4; cf. Ranger 1983: 81) and African elites (Willis 1992: 192) at the expense of local agency; and that it intimates a ‘too once-for-all an event’ which does not allow for ‘subsequent development and conflict over its meaning’ (Ranger 1983: 80-81). Since this thesis is less concerned with the processes of ethno-genesis, and more so with the ways in which ethnicity is produced, negotiated, enacted and invoked at the local level in contemporary society, a comprehensive survey of the literature emerging out of the first two critiques remains outside the scope of this review.⁸ The third branch of attack, however, is of fundamental importance to this thesis and warrants some further attention here.

⁸ This, of course, does not mean to suggest that they are unimportant or unrelated areas of study. An understanding of the pre-colonial roots of identity is revealing, as contemporary productions, negotiations, manifestations and invocations of ethnicity may draw upon mythologies, or be shaped by collective memories, rooted in the pre-colonial past; but, it is the ways in which these are utilised and employed in the present which is of interest to the student of contemporary ethnic violence. For studies which highlight the importance of the pre-colonial roots of contemporary identities, see the contributions by Harries and Papstein in Leroy Vail’s (1989) collection of essays, as well as Greene (1996), and Nugent (2008). Furthermore, the observation that the inventionist tradition tends to obscure African agency in ethno-genesis processes echoes my own dissatisfaction with the marked absence of local level agency in explanations of ethnic violence, but an account of the historical micro-processes of identity construction are outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, there have been a number of historical analyses which explore this ‘agency in tight corners’ (Lonsdale 2000). Spear and Waller’s (1993) exploration of Maasai identity is an excellent study of African agency in identity construction and contestation, as is Justin Willis’ (1992) analysis of Bondei identities. Indeed, the latter’s observation that local level actors were as much the manipulators as the manipulated (1992: 201) is extremely relevant to understanding contemporary elite-mass relations (see Chapter Five for a development of this argument). Peter Sahlin’s (1989) fascinating study of French and Spanish boundary-making is arguably the key non-Africanist text which foregrounds the importance of local agency in the construction of identity.

One of the great strengths of the branch of constructivist literature within which inventionism is located is its recognition that, once constructed, ethnic boundaries and macro-cleavages can become remarkably sticky and robust, having become deeply embedded in the social structures, institutions and consciousness of society. Lynch (2010: 186; see also Berman 1998: 323), for example, notes that the development of identity categories during the colonial period has encouraged Africans to think and act ethnically. Comaroff (1987: 318) states that ethnicity is ubiquitous and tenacious, and ‘refuses to vanish’, and Nugent (2008: 924) asserts that, ‘there would be little sense in denying the salience of ethnicity today.’ The macro-cleavages which have been constructed by historical processes, (in part) through colonial rule, are remarkably stable and remain relevant in contemporary society. This is not to say that currently salient ethnic cleavages and boundaries have not been, cannot be, and will not be altered as a result of further macro-level changes and shifts, or micro-level processes of assimilation and fragmentation, but the degree of change required to deconstruct entrenched, taken for granted, and deeply politicised ethnic identities tends to occur only over an extended period of time. As Gil-White (2001: 516) has pointed out, ‘one hardly finds accounts of ethnic construction that do not refer us to a relatively long, intergenerational and emergent process.’ Thus, I concur with the general criticism that inventionism does not adequately allow for the possibility of future developments, evolutions and shifts in ethnic boundaries, whilst recognising the strengths of the tradition in its acknowledgement of a socially constructed, but durable ethnic consciousness and macro-cleavage.

Furthermore, I am in complete agreement with Ranger’s (1993: 81) self-criticism that the term does not take into account the continual conflicts and negotiations over the content and meaning of ethnic identity.⁹ Indeed, this thesis is intimately concerned with how macro-

⁹ Ranger concludes that ‘imagining’ is a far better term than ‘invention’ as it allows for a more dynamic, continuous process.

cleavages are inflected, reinterpreted and modified by local level dynamics, that is with the multi-vocality of the ‘ethnic group.’ Thus, the literature emerging out of this third strand of criticism points to a valuable and important area of further study in its acknowledgement that ethnic identification is a continual process of imagination, negotiation and contestation – yet this research needs to explore the here and now, as much as it does the historical manifestations of these dimensions. However, at times, the mutability, flexibility, negotiability, fluidity, and contestability of ethnic *boundaries* can be overstated. I do not disagree that small groups and individuals can contest their inclusion within, or exclusion from broad, ethnic categories, as Lynch (2006) has so convincingly illustrated in the case of the Sengwer,¹⁰ nor do I deny that different levels of affiliation can be emphasised in particular circumstances, to be more or less inclusive. However, these negotiations do not often alter or seriously challenge the persistence and awareness of relatively stable and sticky macro-ethnic boundaries, or the consciousness of ethnic differentiation along these lines in Kenyan society. Suggestions that ‘ethnic boundaries and identities thus created remain multiform, ambiguous and mutable’ (Lentz 2000: 130), that people are constantly “‘becoming” Maasai [or Kikuyu, or Luo, or Kalenjin etc] in an endless process of transformation’ (Waller 1993: 302), and that ethnicities are ‘the ambiguous, constantly contested and changing results of cultural politics; the outcome of an endless process... perpetually in the process of creation’ (Berman 1998: 312), can create the impression that there is nothing stable about ethnic identity and differentiation. While this may not always be the intention, the phraseology – that it is ethnic *boundaries* which are highly porous and mutable – is ambiguous and confusing, seeming to imply that macro-ethnic cleavages are very easily challenged, contested and subverted, that ‘there can be hardly any discussion of clearly defined ethnic blocks’ (Lentz 2000: 130) and that ‘the notion of “an ethnic

¹⁰ See also Kweya’s (2011) study of sub-group contestations over Luhya identity

community” is impossible to tie down or clearly define.’ (Lynch 2006: 51). This sits very uncomfortably with everyday understandings of identity which operate at the local level in Kenyan society. I fully agree with the recognition that ethnic communities are far from cohesive and monolithic, and that there is substantial room for negotiation, debate, and multiple interpretation over the *content* of ethnic identities, such as what it *means* to be a Kikuyu. As shall be demonstrated throughout this thesis, conceptualisations over how the ‘group’ should respond to a given situation, what is acceptable behaviour, who we should or should not vote for, who constitutes a brother, an enemy or a friend, are all inflected with, shaped by, and moulded to suit, local circumstances. Nevertheless, these interpretations and contestations, in Kenya at least, operate within, and are significantly constrained by, a more stable macro-level framework in which politically relevant ethnic boundaries are remarkably durable, the salience of ethnic consciousness and differentiation is deeply embedded in social structures, and ethnic identities inform behaviour and shape perceptions of the social world. Indeed, there has been a renewed interest in the importance of boundaries which are *perceived* by everyday actors to be essential and fixed, and I situate myself largely within this school.¹¹ As Van Evera (2001: 22) states, ‘those who underestimate the strength and endurance of ethnic identities are bound to blunder in their dealings with nationalism’ and ethnic conflict. Lentz (1995: 319) elsewhere states, ‘behind the essentialist “façade”... there is always room for multiple meanings and negotiation’; I agree. This does not mean, however, that we should dismiss the ‘façade’ as inconsequential. Thus, it is the content of ethnicity, not the boundary, which is mutable, ambiguous, flexible, debated, fragmented and forever in production. John Lonsdale’s (1992) concept of ‘moral ethnicity’ offers a fruitful framework for this more bottom-up approach to identity, as it seeks ‘to catch this sense of societal

¹¹ See for example, Gil-White (1999, 2001); Van Evera (2001); Brubaker (2004); Luczewski (2005); Zuber (forthcoming).

renegotiation of what one “ought or ought not, to do or believe” in relation to kin and neighbours, patrons and clients’, while still appreciating the fact that ‘our socialization necessarily makes ethnic, and other, identities for us all.’ (Lonsdale 2004: 78).

Despite the potential richness inherent in this emerging debate, and its capacity to push our understanding of the micro-dynamics of ethnic identification, and their relationship to ethnic violence, further, the majority of studies remain focused upon the macro-level historical construction of identity. In the Africanist context there remains a general consensus that ethnic identities became increasingly rigid and singular in the colonial period (Lynch 2006: 49) and in the broader field of ethnicity and nationalism studies, the focus has remained on the macro-structural forces of identity construction, that is on the political, economic, and social changes, which have facilitated the emergence of imagined communities. However, these macro-historical analyses of identity do not account for the variability in ethnic identification processes at the local level in the here and now. As Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008b: 575) have pointed out, ‘the historical emergence and development of the nation does not in itself explain its everyday invocations in the world today’ and if we are to understand the complex and ambiguous role of ethnicity in contemporary episodes of violent conflict, then this macro-historical skew must be corrected. Indeed, by failing to appreciate the multi-vocality of ethnicity in the present, we are unable to account for spatial variations in violence dynamics. As Varshney (2002: 35) states:

By focusing on specific histories in an attempt to explain why some ethnic cleavages acquire political and emotional salience and become master cleavages in the process, the constructivist arguments have advanced our understanding of the macrocontexts of violence and peace. But by failing to deal with variance across time and space, they have left unresolved the local issues... something intervenes between the master narratives and actual violence, skewing the patterns and making it impossible to read off violence from the macrocontexts.

The potential strengths of this constructivist literature and its critical offshoots are seldom adequately carried through in thinking about contemporary ethnic violence in Africa. The stickiness of ethnic identity and its persistence as a framer of social life, as well as the place of local agency and the capacity for multiplicity and reinterpretation on the ground, are often obscured in favour of a more short-term, top-down, instrumentalist approach which emphasises the motivations of, and strategic action by, political elites. This preference for elite-centric analyses extends far beyond the African context and such accounts have arguably become the dominant paradigm in the field of ethnic conflict studies.¹² This overwhelming top-down focus has been well documented. Bax (2000: 28), for example states that there is an ‘uncritical acceptance of a central or national leader perspective’ in accounts of the Bosnian violence; Mamdani (2001: 8) argues that academic writings on Rwanda ‘have highlighted the design from above in a one-sided manner’; Autesserre (2010: 45) asserts that ‘standard analyses of war politics focus not on ordinary people but on elites’; and Fearon and Laitin (2000: 853) go as far as to suggest that ‘virtually every self-identified constructivist who has written on ethnic violence... has tended to blame elite machinations and politicking.’ While these explanations have their roots in the hard instrumentalist approaches of the early 1960s and 1970s – which equated the ethnic community with a political and economic interest group, depicting ethnicity as predominantly epiphenomenal and akin to a ‘false consciousness’ imposed upon the gullible masses – they became increasingly popular in the wake of the crises in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Rallying against the ‘ancient hatreds’ explanations which pervaded popular discourse, scholars argued that these conflicts

¹² A select list of the theoretical articulations of these arguments include de Figueiredo and Weingast (1999), Snyder (2000), Wilkinson (2004), and Kaufman (2001). For examples of their application to a variety of cases see Brass (1997), Denitch (1994); Woodward (1995); Gagnon (1994, 2004); Prunier (1995), Hintjens (1999) and Deng (1995).

are better understood as the result of deliberate orchestration from above, as ambitious and chauvinistic leaders sought to capture positions of power, wealth and privilege, or embattled elites tried to maintain hold of them. The argument postulates that elites ‘play the ethnic card’, that is that they mobilise supporters along ethnic lines, they construct, manipulate, fuel, foster, incite, and inflame ethnic passions, grievances, fears and animosities, and they instigate and direct violent ethnic militias in the pursuit of their own political agendas.¹³ De Smedt (2009: 584) summarises the key points underscoring these elite theories of ethnic violence with regards to Kenya, stating:

At the risk of over-simplifying, this amounts to pitting one community against the other, exploiting latent (ethnic) grievances about scarce resources (often ‘land’), and triggering ethnic violence through incitement, as a means of securing political power and facilitating elite accumulation of wealth.

While these arguments are applied to a diverse range of cases, they have found particularly fertile ground in the context of big-man politics and neo-patrimonial rule widely understood to characterise African politics. Scholars have emphasised the particularly powerful incentives of electoral victory afforded by the privatised nature of the African state, pointing to the considerable opportunities for personal enrichment which are attached to holding public office (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 52).¹⁴ Indeed, Bayart et al. (1999) go as far as to suggest that there has been a ‘criminalisation of the state’ which facilitates this personal accumulation of wealth. In this context of ‘spoils politics’ (Allen 1995: 301) and weak accountability, the incentive to use all means possible to gain or maintain power is

¹³ Elite based explanations often point to ‘ethnic outbidding’ in explaining elite motivations for playing the ethnic card (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Rothschild 1981; Horowitz 1985). Ethnic outbidding refers to situations where members of the same ethnic group compete for power. In such situations, it is argued, there are greater incentives for elites to assume more extreme ‘ethnic’ positions than their competitors in order to mobilise supporters.

¹⁴ Bayart’s (1993) ‘politics of the belly’ is arguably the key articulation of the predatory nature of African politics and the pursuit of wealth and power which underscore it. The centrality of this notion is evident in popular discourses of ‘cutting the national cake’ heard in many countries on the continent, and in Kenya specifically the phrase ‘it’s our turn to eat’ (Wamwere 2003; Wrong 2009; Branch, Cheeseman and Gardner 2010) is commonly heard.

heightened; as Mueller (2011: 100) states in relation to Kenya, ‘Politicians are dying to win and freed of institutional and legal constraints are able and willing to use violence to achieve their ends.’

Branch and Cheeseman (2009) offer perhaps one of the most comprehensive accounts of elite behaviour and motivation in manipulating ethnicity and inciting violence in the Kenyan context.¹⁵ They argue that the stability of the state in the early years of independence rested upon the collusion of elites, who, with sufficient incentives to maintain the status quo, contained dissent from below. However, under worsening economic conditions in the 1980s, these intra-elite patronage networks became unsustainable, and Moi was forced to adopt an increasingly exclusionary system of government. As the elite alliance began to fragment, clamours for political liberalisation intensified among those excluded. Under intense pressure, both externally and from within, Moi was forced to reintroduce multi-party politics in the country; in order to hold on to power he exacerbated ethnic tensions to divide the opposition, and he mobilised ethnic militias to intimidate their supporters. Branch and Cheeseman go on to suggest that the fragmentation of the political elite continued into 2007 and that this encouraged a similar employment of violent means to achieve and maintain power, concluding that ‘when the centre fragments, the “instrumentalization of disorder” may come into play’ (2009: 17). Thus, much of their analysis echoes theories which explore the logic and rationality of conflict in weak, collapsing and failed states.¹⁶ These arguments suggest that violence is a deliberate and calculated survival strategy, an ‘instrumentalisation of disorder’ (Chabal and Daloz 1999), employed by elites in the face of ‘collapsing patronage politics’ (Reno 1998: 12), dwindling resources, and the ‘retreat of the state’ (Braathen et al.

¹⁵ Though Throup and Hornsby (1998) offer a very thorough analysis of ethnicity, electoral politics and elite motivations for mobilising violence in the context of the 1990s.

¹⁶ Indeed, they appear to recognise the similarities, affirming that, ‘We do not believe Kenya is a failed state. However, it is chastening to think that the situation over the first months of 2008 closely resembled the fluid and potentially uncontrollable situation typical of collapsing states’ (Branch and Cheeseman 2009: 16).

2000: 19). The basic line of argument underlying this school of thought is as follows:¹⁷ In the early years of independence, functioning neo-patrimonial systems, in which the levels of high and low politics were linked through complex networks of patronage – ‘rhizomes’ as Bayart (1993) describes them – provided a modicum of stability in many states. Political elites were accommodated within the state, and were granted access to resources through horizontal patron-client ties in a reciprocal assimilation of elites (Bayart 1993); people on the ground were then connected to these elites through ethnically structured patronage networks. In this way, rulers ensured loyalty and suppressed political challenge by accommodating the elite within the structures of the state and distributing resources through patrimonial networks, simultaneously balancing and managing the demands of various ethnic groups (Abrahamsen 2001: 85). However, this system of patronage was costly and, for the most part, unsustainable, particularly following the economic crises of the 1980s and the end of the Cold War.¹⁸ As resources dwindled and patronage networks shrank, more and more elites were excluded from power, the struggle for hegemony and access to scarce resources intensified, and elites had far greater incentives to mobilise their supporters either to maintain their hold on power, or to challenge the status quo. Braathen et. al’s (2000) collection of essays apply versions of this argument to a number of specific conflicts, including Rwanda, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the contributions are both convincing and persuasive. In their introduction the editors summarise the basic argument, stating:

The structuring of state violence is above all a reflection of the wish to keep power and thereby the possibilities for accumulation. These contests on the arena of the state can thus provoke violent confrontation between groups with different locality and/or

¹⁷ It should be noted that there are significant differences in explanations of the way in which disorder is instrumentalised by elite actors, and in the nature and dynamics of the resulting conflict. However, the underlying supposition is that, when faced with political and economic crises which threaten their positions, elites will find innovative ways to deflect these threats, including the orchestration of violence.

¹⁸ Which saw a significant reduction in external aid to many African countries, as well as the imposition of conditionalities on remaining financial support.

community affiliations. In particular, these situations tend to emerge when the neopatrimonial state is forced to retreat owing to lack of resources. (2000: 14).

These top-down approaches to ethnic conflict, both in Africa and more generally, offer powerful insights into, and are invaluable for understanding, elite interactions and motivations.¹⁹ However, they are subject to a number of criticisms and they leave much unexplained. Firstly, by reducing ethnicity to a political tool employed by elites, many of these approaches understate its salience and significance in the everyday lives of local level actors, and they afford it little independent effect (Toft 2003: 9). There are two slightly different formulations of elite-centric arguments, but both suffer from some common problems. In the first, scholars emphasise the fact that ethnicity is but one of a number of different identities that individuals have, and they argue that politicians must work very hard in order to elevate its prominence in the minds of their supporters (Wilkinson 2004: 4). In the second, scholars argue that elites must manipulate the *content* of ethnic identity, ‘such as making Serbs believe that Serbs cannot live with Croats’ (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 850). Neither of these approaches grant sufficient agency to people on the ground in identification processes, and both imply a ‘clever elites’-‘dumb masses’ dichotomy²⁰ which is highly problematic. Paul Brass (1997: 6), for example, writes:

When examined at the actual originating sites of ethnic and communal violence, it is often the case that the precipitating incidents arise out of situations that are either not inherently ethnic/communal in nature or are ambiguous in character, that their transformation into caste or communal incidents depends upon the attitudes toward them taken by local politicians and local representatives of state authority, and that their ultimate elevation into grand communal confrontations depends upon their further reinterpretation by the press and extralocal politicians and authorities. The “official” interpretation that finally becomes universally accepted is often, if not usually, very far removed, often unrecognizable, from the precipitating events.

¹⁹ Though at times it is unclear why violence is necessarily the most rational strategy for elites. Kaufman (2006: 48), in a critique of the application of elite theories to Rwanda and Sudan, states that ‘in neither case was the predatory strategy the best option for leaders seeking to maintain power; in fact, in both cases their violent strategies resulted, predictably, in the loss of their power.’

²⁰ The phrasing employed here is borrowed from Hodgkin (1961: 60).

Here Brass very clearly locates agency wholly with political elites, and the ordinary person is markedly absent; s/he is simply assumed to accept elite manipulations and interpretations without question, even when they are ‘unrecognizable’ to the actual event. The reader is left wondering how and why these elite projects succeed. As shall be illustrated throughout this thesis, ethnicity is far more deeply embedded in local level consciousness and social life than is afforded by these situationalist approaches. Local level actors themselves continuously produce and negotiate their identities and construct locally contingent readings of events, often reinforcing, but sometimes challenging and contesting, appeals by elite actors. Indeed, closer attention to these processes can help to explain why elite appeals often resonate on the ground, and also why they sometimes do not. Moreover, contrary to the argument that elites are able to demobilise all other identities individuals hold, my own research indicates that people do not simply fight along the cleavages laid out for them by politicians. The situation on the ground is far more complex than this, as people re-interpret and renegotiate the lines between enemy and friend in light of local contexts and individual relationships. Thus, people are not simply ‘zombies mechanically responding to orders from above’ (Lemarchand 2009: 124), but are active agents in the construction of their own identities and the interpretation of events, and a closer exploration of the way in which these interact with elite provocations is necessary.

The second, and related, problematic assumption inherent within these approaches is also evident in the quotation above. Even if we are to accept the elite manipulation argument without the reservations already outlined, the notion that top-down constructions become ‘universally accepted’, resonating evenly and unwaveringly across time and space, renders temporal and spatial variations in violence dynamics inexplicable. Why do some villages, neighbourhoods and towns remain peaceful whilst others erupt into intense and deadly

fighting? What accounts for the significant delays in the onset of violence in certain places? How can we explain local level peace efforts and challenges to the macro-narrative?

Thus, while these approaches are invaluable in identifying the important role played by elite actors in episodes of widespread and intense violence, and they are persuasive in their explorations of elite motivations for involvement in conflict, they often presuppose rather than explain participation in violence at the grassroots (Scacco 2008: 5), and they leave the reader consistently asking ‘why the followers follow?’ (Horowitz 1985: 140; Fearon and Laitin 2000: 846). More than this, however, scholars are now beginning to question whether the masses are following at all (Kalyvas 2003; 2006).²¹ The remainder of this chapter explores the major strands of the existing literature which seek to answer these questions. While these theories have undoubtedly made significant contributions to the understanding of ethnic violence, they still largely remain at a high level of aggregation. By taking groups as the unit of analysis they fail to appreciate the complexity of ethnic identification processes and participation in violence at the grassroots.

Group Grievance: Horizontal Inequalities and Historical Injustice

For it is because of profit and honour that men are incited against one another – not... in order that they may get them for themselves, but because they see others (some justly, some unjustly) getting more. Again, it is because of insolence, fear, superiority, contempt and disproportionate growth. Or again, in another way it is because of electioneering, belittlement, smallness, or dissimilarity.

(Aristotle, *Politics*, V.2, section 1302a, line 36 – section 1302b line 4)

Grievance-based understandings of conflict and violence have a long history, dating back to ancient Greek thought, and the significance of inequality, discontent and relative deprivation, here identified by Aristotle, remains prominent in contemporary theorising. At

²¹ Brubaker et al. (2006: 6) for example, describe the response to ‘fervent ethnonationalist rhetoric’ amongst ordinary Clujeni as ‘tepid.’

their most basic level, these accounts suggest that when people compare their lot with others and perceive a significant disparity, or when they recognize a prolonged or acute gap between expectations and the capability to achieve them, the resulting frustrations and discontents can be a significant motivation for participation in violent action. There is a voluminous body of work which develops and explores these theories of relative deprivation, but Ted Robert Gurr's (1970) influential book *Why Men Rebel* is arguably the most systematic and detailed articulation of the argument. This is not to say, however, that these theories have been universally accepted; on the contrary, extensive, predominantly statistical, testing has produced contradictory results and the search for a clear relationship between inequality and violence remains elusive.²² Indeed, proponents of grievance-based explanations have been, and remain, locked in a fierce and ongoing debate with scholars who eschew any significant correlation between inequality and conflict. Based upon both the empirical findings of large-N studies and upon the theoretical argument that while grievances and inequalities are ubiquitous, violence is not, critics have suggested that economic incentive offers a far better understanding of participation in violence (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Keen 1998; Berdal and Malone 2000). Despite the popularity of this burgeoning school of thought which elevates 'greed' over grievance, explanations based upon the latter have recently experienced a resurgence, and employing Frances Stewart's (2000, 2002) concept of 'horizontal inequalities', advocates of grievance explanations have responded persuasively to some of the criticisms directed at them.²³ They argue that contradictory findings are reflective of the choice in units of analysis, and they assert that their opponents tend to measure vertical

²² For a detailed review of this literature, see Lichbach (1989).

²³ It should be noted, however, that the dichotomy between 'greed' and 'grievance' explanations is not always clear cut. Stewart (2004: 270), for example, acknowledges that economic incentives can drive participation in violence, and Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 581) concede that 'if a country is characterized by ethnic dominance its risk of conflict is nearly doubled.' Ballentine and Sherman (2003) have furthered the discussion by offering a model which identifies a complex interplay of greed and grievance in violence.

(individual) inequalities rather than horizontal (group) inequalities (Deiwiks, Cederman and Gleditsch 2012: 290). They highlight, however, that:

Civil wars are group conflicts – not confrontations between individuals randomly fighting each other... Hence, the focus should be on polarization, or inequality between groups, not between individuals. (Østby 2008a: 144).

Horizontal inequalities, then, are defined as ‘inequalities in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups’ (Stewart 2008: 3). That is, horizontal inequalities reflect intergroup differentials in access to economic resources such as land and jobs, political rights and inclusion in state institutions, and cultural recognition and status.²⁴ They can have both material and socio-psychological dimensions; while inequalities in the distribution of resources and socio-economic opportunities are important, so too are notions of esteem and group worth.²⁵ Horizontal inequalities can be the product of deliberate discrimination and exclusionary policies and social practices, or the unintended result of uneven modernization and development (Gurr 2000: 107).²⁶ Conflict, then, is seen to arise either out of increasing group frustrations and grievances over subordinate status positions, where ‘one feels compelled to act against the unjustly dominant groups as a way of changing the imbalance’ (Petersen 2002: 263), *or* out of a desire on the part of the dominant group to maintain its position of hegemony (Stewart 2002: 3). There have been a number of cross national studies which illustrate the robustness of the theory (Østby 2008a, 2008b; Østby, Nordas and Rod 2009), and it has also been persuasively

²⁴ The concept echoes Gurr’s (1993, 2000) more recent works in which he applies his theory of relative deprivation to ethnic conflict, and ‘minorities at risk.’

²⁵ The two are often interlinked and holding positions of power and influence in society is intimately tied up with feelings of group worth. While there has been far more attention paid to objective and material inequalities, some scholars have explored the socio-psychological dimensions, emphasising feelings and perceptions of group worth, inferiority, superiority, dominance and subordination. In his analysis of the role of emotions in fuelling ethnic violence, for example, Petersen (2002: 40) asserts that ‘human beings are motivated by a desire for esteem’ and firmly identifies sentiments of inferiority as a source of resentment. Horowitz (1985: 141-228) similarly draws attention to the importance of perceptions of group worth.

²⁶ Hechter, (1975), for example, argues that uneven modernisation advantaged some groups at the expense of others and engendered an ‘internal colonialism’ and a cultural division of labour. Horowitz (1985: 141-228) similarly argues that the uneven distribution of resources and opportunity during colonial rule promoted group disparities (both material and socio-psychological) resulting in notions of ‘backward’ and ‘advanced’ groups.

applied to a diversity of case studies including Nepal (Murshed and Gates 2005), Indonesia (Diprose 2009; Mancini 2005), Nigeria (Onwuzuruigbo 2011), Côte D'Ivoire (Langer 2005) and Kenya (Muhala 2009; Stewart 2010). Furthermore, scholars within this branch of thought are developing more nuanced arguments which address the question of where and when grievances generate violence and where and when they do not. Cederman, Rod and Weidmann (2007) for example, argue that grievances are higher, and therefore more likely to lead to conflict, when there is an overlap between ethnicity and geographical region; Gubler and Selway (2012) suggest that cross-cutting cleavages can reduce the ability of leaders to mobilise ethnic communities, and argue that it is only when ethnicity is reinforced by other socially salient cleavages that violent action is likely to occur; Langer (2005) argues that the potential for violence is higher where groups are politically excluded as well as socio-economically disadvantaged; and Stewart et al. (2008: 290) suggest that 'people are unlikely to take to violent conflict if their own group leaders are politically included.' Indeed, these latter two points are particularly powerful in the Kenyan context of zero-sum contest and a 'politics of the belly' mentality, where socio-economic benefits are expected to trickle down from 'our man' being in power, and where exclusion from government is equated with almost certain marginalisation, discrimination and subordination.

Many, if not most, analyses of inter-ethnic relations in Kenya, and the emerging explanations of the post-election violence more specifically, have drawn attention to the importance of horizontal inequalities to some degree, highlighting processes of ethnic marginalisation, discrimination, exclusion, and domination. Furthermore, 'the tone of discourses on horizontal inequalities has assumed nearly "historical injustice" [*sic*] ring to it' (Okello 2006: xii), where scholars equate current grievances with long-standing injustices

and tensions, particularly with regards to the distribution of land.²⁷ Indeed, grievances over historical land injustices are often regarded as being key drivers of conflict in the country. Boone (2011: 1312), for example, claims that ‘all previous accounts recognize that 1991-1992 violence stemmed from long-standing land conflicts’; Githinji and Holmquist (2008: 346) state that ‘the exclusion of the autochthones of the Rift Valley and the Coast in land resettlement programmes as both beneficiaries and planners is central to understanding the intensity of the violence’; and Cheeseman (2008: 167) asserts that ‘salient ethno-regional identities reinforced by historical grievances over land ownership, economic inequality, and political exclusion are central to an understanding of the Kenya crisis.’ In this thesis I frame my discussion of land in terms of contemporary grievances over the appropriation of space by ‘immigrants’, and I explore sentiments of other historical injustices through the framings of my interviewees. I do not offer an account of the historical origins or evolution of land injustices, nor do I trace the roots of the multiplicity of past injustices. That is not to say that I do not recognise their importance, but rather that, for the student of contemporary violence, it is the way in which historical narratives are used to justify existing animosities which are of significance. Furthermore, as shall be discussed below, an overemphasis on the historical roots of grievance carries with it a potential danger of over-determinism.

Thus, whilst these grievance explanations are invaluable for developing an understanding of ethnic violence, and this thesis consistently highlights the importance of

²⁷ A detailed discussion of the unjust and unequal allocation of land remains outside the scope of this thesis. However, by way of a brief overview it can be said that the settler economy created during colonial rule dispossessed many communities of their land, particularly in the white highlands, and engendered large-scale migration of people in search of wage labour on settler farms. As the country moved towards independence the Million Acre Scheme was set up to structure the transfer of land from the departing Europeans back to African hands. However, the initial intention of returning the land to ‘local’ communities was disrupted by the implementation of a willing-buyer-willing-seller policy (Anderson and Lochery 2008: 335) and in the Rift Valley, the native Kalenjin found themselves largely excluded from land allocations as Kenyatta facilitated Kikuyu acquisitions (Githinji and Holmquist 2008: 346). This is an extremely simplistic and reductive articulation of the land question, however. See Oucho (2002: particularly Chapter 7) for a more detailed discussion. See Rutten and Owuor (2009) for an analysis of the post-election violence that situates the historical evolution of land conflicts at the heart of the crisis.

struggles over relative status and access to, and distribution of, resources, they are subject to a number of significant limitations. There are three key interrelated points which should be highlighted here. Firstly, grievance-based approaches tend to focus upon the objective dimensions of inequalities, using quantitative data to measure and illustrate their existence and intensity, while the subjective elements of grievance are often downplayed. This problem is also identified by Langer and Mikami (2012) who argue that this objective focus is problematic ‘because people act on the basis of their *perceptions* of the world in which they live, and these perceptions may differ substantially from the “objective reality”’ (2012: 3, original emphasis).²⁸ I suggest that we need to push this point even further; if perceptions of inequality are of more importance than statistical inequalities – of which people may not even be aware (Stewart 2010: 14) – then we need to explore what shapes and influences these perceptions. In this thesis I argue that they can be distorted by lived experiences and shaped through interactions with others in everyday life, and as such are part of the continual production and negotiation of ethnic identity at the local level. Perceptions of inequality, and discrimination, and feelings of superiority and inferiority, dominance and subordination at the macro-level can be reinforced or complicated by micro-level dynamics.

This point leads into the second key criticism of the existing literature: that it predominantly identifies grievances at the national level. That is, analyses tend to identify and explore country-wide dynamics of dominance and subordination and focus upon the competition for, and distribution of, resources at the state level. However, as Cunningham and Weidmann (2010) have pointed out, ethnic grievances and disputes often operate at the level of local political boundaries, and broad national level inequalities can be inflected with and problematised by local level experience. Indeed, discourses of superiority and inferiority,

²⁸ This is of course not to suggest that people are always mistaken about their relative status – Langer and Mikami unequivocally demonstrate that this is not the case – only that we cannot simply *assume* grievances will correspond neatly with the statistical reality of inequality.

and debates concerning socio-economic and political rights in areas with ‘local majorities’ (Cunningham and Weidmann 2010: 1036) operate alongside the macro-narrative, and whilst sometimes reinforcing of it, they can also run counter to it. Conceptualisations of hierarchies and status positions are far more complex and nuanced than the macro-context allows. While the Kikuyu may be perceived to be (and indeed may perceive themselves to be) dominant at the national level, in the midst of pervasive regional and micro-level discourses of autochthony, other groups can feel that they have, or that they *should* have, a superior status in their own areas; consequently an inferior status can be imposed upon members of other communities through social practices within certain spaces.²⁹ Discrimination and feelings of grievance can operate below the level of the state, and perceptions of inequality and relative status are, consequently, not consistent across space. By taking the ethnic group as an unproblematic whole, as a cohesive and monolithic unit with clearly defined and uncontested grievances, the multi-vocality of ethnicity is obscured and the micro-spatial variations in violence dynamics remain difficult to explain.

The final limitation related to these approaches relates to the tendency to conflate salient grievances with historical injustices. It is certainly the case that past discrimination, subordination and exclusion can generate significant inequalities and resentments which persist and are deeply felt in the present. Indeed, many of my own interviewees alluded to them as a significant factor in fuelling their participation in the violence. However, a retrospective reading of historical injustice through the lens of a particular episode of violence can over-determine conflict along particular cleavage lines, over-emphasise one

²⁹ Interestingly, Gurr (2000: 68) alludes to a similar dynamic when he states that ‘groups often feel superior because they share a belief that they are the original people of a place.’ While he does not explore this in any detail, the point has important implications for the potential complexification of the relationship between macro- and micro-level perceptions of relative status. These points are intimately related to the burgeoning literature on autochthony, which is addressed throughout the thesis.

source of resentment, and can mask the flexibility of the friend/enemy, ally/rival conceptualisation. Kanyinga (2009: 341), for example, falls into this trap when he states:

The violence that followed Kenya's disputed presidential election result in December 2007 may have caught many commentators on Kenya by surprise. But looking through Kenya's politics of land rights especially in the former white highlands shows how predictable this violence was... Giving preference to the Kikuyu in the resettlement effort led to antagonism with other communities, the Kalenjin in particular.

Such a historical reading implies a certain inevitability to conflict between the Kikuyu and other communities, especially the Kalenjin, and suggests that conflict was primarily, if not almost entirely, about land. However, the political fault lines in Kenya are far more flexible than this and there are multiple, diverse, and cross-cutting sources of resentment fuelling existing animosities. Consequently, the salience of some historical injustices can be diminished through different political allegiances, while the significance of others can be heightened; that is, historical injustices can effectively be put to one side should the potential for future inclusion and favour be assured through political alliance. The Kikuyu-Kalenjin coalition in the lead-up to the 2013 elections is indicative of this.³⁰ Indeed, Kamungi (2009: 347) draws attention to this flexibility, stating:

The insider-outsider dichotomy and access to land rights are tempered by political positioning of groups: when outsiders and outsiders [*sic*] share a common political affiliation, the land question recedes in significance as the lines of political division become blurred.

Thus, antagonisms between communities are not constant and historical injustices can wax and wane in significance. Gurr's (1993: 173) notion of 'active' and 'persisting' grievances, can perhaps offer some assistance in making a differentiation between horizontal inequalities and historical injustice. While he does not offer an extensive discussion of the distinction, the dual concepts might allude to the fact that while there are enduring grievances with their roots in historical processes and policies, they need not *necessarily* be a significant factor

³⁰ As is the significant level of Kalenjin support for a Kikuyu presidential candidate in 2002.

driving the current conflict. Thus, while I accept the importance of grievances over past injustices, it is the way in which they speak to the contemporary socio-political context which is of importance and which renders them more or less salient.³¹ Other scholars have similarly cautioned against a retrospective reading of history through the lens of violence. Straus (2006: 18), for example, laments the vast attention paid to historical processes in understanding Rwanda, stating, ‘history now overdetermines the genocide’ and Fujii (2009a: 73), similarly asserts that ‘reading history backward creates a straight-line trajectory from past oppression to genocidal hatreds.’ While I do not believe that most accounts of the Kenyan crisis go as far as this,³² it is worth noting the dangers of historical determinism given the tendency to conflate contemporary grievance with historical injustice.

Group Fears: The Security Dilemma and the Construction of Fear

In addition to the wealth of attention paid to group resentments and antagonisms over inequalities, a large volume of work has emerged identifying collective fear as the central driving force behind ethnic violence. The most common formulation of this argument adopts a rational actor approach, and has emerged out of the application of the International Relations concept of the security dilemma to situations of intrastate war. The security dilemma can be understood in the following way: in an anarchic international system, states are concerned about their safety, fearing attack, domination and annihilation by others. In order to ensure their security, they mobilise in self-defence. However, these actions render others more insecure and, uncertain about the intentions of the mobilising state, they in turn

³¹ Lynch (2008; 2010; 2011), for example, has convincingly illustrated how contested histories have been used by elites and non-elite actors to justify contemporary demands.

³² Indeed, most accounts seem to allude to ‘latent’ grievances which are then activated, manipulated, and accentuated by elites. While I would push for greater attention to local agency in the ‘activation’ of these grievances, I agree with the general point that there is not a linear causal chain between historical injustice and contemporary violence.

take similar actions to safeguard their survival. Thus, the actions states take to ensure their own security causes reactions that actually render them less secure.³³ There are three fundamental elements underscoring the security dilemma. Firstly, it is structural: it is the anarchic system which brings it into action. Secondly, uncertainty about the intentions of others is central to understanding spiralling fear and hostility. Finally, it is an unintended ‘tragedy’ (Roe 1999: 183), a ‘heartbreaking plight’ (Herz 1950: 137) – that is, the states locked into these spirals of insecurity do not have malign intent, rather it is their mutual fear that leads to conflict. Indeed, Tang (2011: 517) argues that if the perception of the threat is in fact accurate, and one party does intend harm to another, then it is no longer a security *dilemma*, it is a security *threat* which spirals.³⁴

Posen (1993) was the first to apply the concept explicitly to situations of ethnic conflict. Examining the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Posen argues that the collapse of imperial regimes creates an ‘emerging anarchy’ under which different ethnic groups suddenly find themselves responsible for their own protection. Windows of opportunity and vulnerability are opened up, and in the ensuing pursuit of the key to security – power – groups will begin to threaten others, who will respond in turn (1993: 27-28). Posen further emphasises two factors which will increase the intensity of the security dilemma, and therefore, the likelihood of violence: the indistinguishability of offensive and defensive forces, which intensifies uncertainties about a group’s intents, and the effectiveness of offensive strategies which can create incentives for pre-emptive attack. Since the publication of this seminal article, the argument has flourished as scholars have sought to illustrate the rationality of fear in ethnic conflict through the lens of the security

³³ See Butterfield (1951), Herz (1950, 1966) and Jervis (1976) for the original development of the security dilemma theory, and for more nuanced conceptualisations than the simplified description offered here.

³⁴ It is for this reason that Tang suggests that the less restrictive ‘spiral model’ – the worsening of relationships, arms races, insecurity, fear and violence – is better suited to understanding the mechanics of ethnic conflict.

dilemma, and have suggested that, 'risk-aversion is enough to motivate murderous violence' (Hardin 1995: 148).³⁵

However, a direct application of the concept to intrastate conflict has proven problematic. Scholars have highlighted the fact that anarchy is rare within states (Kaufman 1996a: 151), and that often the security dilemma is coincident with the movement towards violence, not the cause of it (de Figueiredo and Weingast 1999; Lake and Rothchild 1996). Thus, as Kaufman (1996b: 112) has stated:

The neorealist concept of a security dilemma cannot be mechanically applied to ethnic conflict: anarchy and the *possibility* of a security threat are not enough to create a security dilemma between communities which may have been at peace for decades.

Consequently, in many accounts, the structural dimensions of the original concept have been downplayed in favour of a perceptual security dilemma,³⁶ in which perceptions of insecurity and threat are exaggerated and are not the direct result of structural conditions. Some scholars argue that the security dilemma can be deliberately fostered and manipulated by elites (Kaufman 1996a, 1996b; de Figueiredo and Weingast 1999³⁷), situating these largely within the elite manipulation school of thought. Susanne Mueller (2008: 199) alludes to a similar line of argument when she states that the negative rhetoric which marked the 2007 election campaigns in Kenya 'ignited fears on both sides about what would happen if their parties did not win.' Others suggest that the security dilemma can be triggered by particular events, circumstances or conditions. Horowitz (1985: 179), for example, argues that the anxiety-laden 'fear of subordination' is a characteristic of unranked ethnic systems, and consequently,

³⁵ See for example, Fearon (1995); Lake and Rothchild (1996); Kaufman (1996a, 1996b, 2001); Melander (1999); Roe (1999, 2002, 2005); Rose (2000); Saideman et al. (2002); Tang (2011).

³⁶ Snyder (1985) is usually credited with identifying the distinction between structural and perceptual security dilemmas.

³⁷ De Figueiredo and Weingast argue that a security dilemma alone is insufficient as an explanation of violence, and suggest that elites deliberately inflame fears about the other. People on the ground are often uncertain about the intentions of their leaders. However, while they may not believe the rhetoric propounded by elites, they accept extreme actions and follow them because the costs of being wrong are too high. In this way de Figueiredo and Weingast argue for the 'rationality of fear' and their argument straddles both elite manipulation and fear-based explanations of violence.

it 'limits and modifies perceptions, producing extreme reactions to modest threats.' Saideman et al. (2002) extend this line of argument and explore the relationship of the ethnic security dilemma to democratisation processes. They suggest that since the government is often the greatest threat to security, groups fear its control by others. Thus, in divided societies the search for security motivates groups to seek control of the state, and through each group's efforts to capture power, the fears of others are reinforced. Consequently, democratic transitions are likely to intensify ethnic group insecurity, and the uncertainty about future prospects inherent within them can cause ethnic communities to act pre-emptively. Traces of this argument can be seen in Bratton and Kimenyi's (2008: 276) analysis of the 2007 Kenyan elections in which they argue that groups vote along ethnic lines defensively:³⁸

Kenyans do not easily trust co-nationals who hail from ethnic groups other than their own... they worry that their co-nationals are prone to organize politically along exclusive ethnic lines and to govern in a discriminatory fashion.

Some scholars have located the source of the perceptual security dilemma within group norms and 'myth-symbol complexes.'³⁹ They suggest, for example, that feelings of insecurity and threat are, at least in part, a product of perceptions of the past; that is, groups fear other communities as a result of memories and narratives relating to how they acted under similar circumstances in the past. Posen (1993: 30), for instance, argues that newly independent groups will assess the offensive tendencies of ethnic others by using history, asking 'how did other groups behave the last time they were unconstrained?'⁴⁰ Thus, translating this argument to a situation of democratic transition in Kenya, for example, it could be said that fears of the Kikuyu community retaining the presidential seat are intensified as a result of prior marginalisation and exclusion under both the Kenyatta and

³⁸ Their argument relates to voting behaviour and not explicitly to violence, however.

³⁹ The myth symbol complex has been identified by Anthony Smith (1986). It refers to the shared cultural attributes, traits, histories, narratives and values of different groups.

⁴⁰ Consequently, while his argument is often identified as one of a structural security dilemma, there are perceptual elements to it. This has been identified by Paul Roe (1999: 189).

Kibaki regimes.⁴¹ Others focus on the myths, narratives and histories which justify hostilities and fears of subordination as facilitators of the emergence of a security dilemma. Kaufman's (1996a, 1996b, 2001) 'symbolic politics' argument is the most explicit articulation of this point. He notes (2001: 32) that myths of historical domination, and racist ideologies of particular groups as inferior, evil and dangerous can engender prevalent fears, which 'justify and motivate a resort to violence in self-defence.' Thus Kaufman's theory, and this strand of argumentation in general, sit at the intersection between predominantly rational actor approaches and what Brubaker and Laitin (2004: 109) term 'culturalist' arguments. Scholars who adopt the latter tend to focus upon particular cases, illustrating how specific symbols, myths, narratives and cultural texts have been constructed and deeply embedded in consciousness, engendering fears of, and hostilities towards, the ethnic other.⁴² Kapferer, for example, explores the demonization of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and demonstrates how they have come to be regarded as 'agents of evil' (Kapferer 1988: 101; see also Spencer 1990). In the case of Rwanda both Prunier (1995) and Mamdani (2001) draw attention to the prevalence of a racist ideology representing the Tutsi as evil foreigners, who would pose a significant threat to the Hutu natives should they maintain power again. Thus, for Prunier, fear of the evil Tutsi devils underscored the genocide, and Mamdani (2001: 14) similarly claims that the mission was 'one of cleansing the soil of a threatening alien presence.'⁴³ Thus, while not explicitly identifying themselves with the security dilemma literature, these

⁴¹ While it might seem that this argument falls into the trap of historical determinism as highlighted above, in fact it circumvents it by situating perceptions of group histories in the contemporary context. Thus, it allows for greater flexibility in that, if there is no reason to fear a particular group, perhaps by virtue of an existing political alliance, then past actions are less threatening.

⁴² These approaches cannot be accused of assuming a top-down macro-level perspective which much of this review critiques. However, they remain focused at the wider group level, and assume rather than explain the resonance of these culturally constructed fears across the ethnic group as a whole. As Brubaker and Laitin (2004: 110) state, 'it is difficult to know whether, when, where, to what extent, and in what manner the posited beliefs and fears were actually held.'

⁴³ For other culturalist accounts of ethnic or religious violence see Zulaika (1988) in the case of the Basques; and in reference to Muslim-Hindu relations in India see (Pandey 1992) and Hansen (1996).

culturalist accounts remain similarly concerned with uncovering the logic of inter-ethnic fear and hatred which makes violence understandable and comprehensible.

Thus, there is a rich and diverse literature which explores how fears of other groups can lead to spirals of insecurity and violence and many of these arguments have value in understanding the macro-contexts of ethnic conflict. However, they are subject to many of the same criticisms identified above in relation to grievance-based explanations. By taking the ethnic group as a cohesive unitary actor, these theories assume that fears are consistently felt, experienced and acted upon across space, and they fail to appreciate that they are rather produced, negotiated and transformed in local contexts by ordinary people in the course of their everyday lives. Thus, neither an emerging anarchy, nor the deliberate social, or unintended cultural, construction of fear, will produce coherent and uniform perceptions of the ethnic other at the local level. Macro-narratives are always inflected with localised dynamics and it is only through an examination of these variations that the spatial and temporal contours of violence can be explained. Relatedly, the notion that the objects of fear are the same across time and space is problematic; that is to say, these theories tend to understand a clear inter-ethnic cleavage along which fear is coherently constructed and defined. Thus, they assume that the animosity between the Luo and the Kikuyu communities, for example, is both temporally and spatially constant. However, understandings of 'the enemy' shift according to localised and political contexts, and fears can be either intensified, diffused, or negotiated by people and by circumstances on the ground. Local rumours during violence, for example, can reinforce fears along the macro-cleavage, but they can also subvert them, and cross-cutting associations and personal relationships can problematise the macro-narrative of inter-group fear and hatred. During the Kenyan violence not all members of 'rival' groups were regarded with equal levels of fear and suspicion and it was not uncommon for neighbours, friends and relatives to help, protect and unite with supposed

‘enemies.’ Similarly, while in one setting members of the Luo community are unequivocal enemies, to be feared and defended against, in another they are potential allies in the defence against a more dangerous, common threat. Thus, the dichotomy between friend and enemy is not quite so clear cut at the local level, and we must delve further into the micro-dynamics of the construction of fear to understand the complex and ambiguous role of ethnicity in situations of violence.

Economic Incentive, Greed, and the ‘Banality of Ethnic War’

The final branch of the literature moves away from explanations of violence as seen primarily through the lens of the ‘ethnic group.’ Troubled by the collective action problems associated with grievance-based approaches to ethnic conflict,⁴⁴ these arguments focus rather upon more individualistic behaviours and motivations, emphasising economic opportunity, the pursuit of individual benefits, greed, thuggery, criminality, political opportunism, and vigilantism as central features driving conflict. Underscoring the diverse formulations of these ‘greed’ theories, then, is the notion that conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance (Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004, 2005; Collier 1999, 2000; Keen 1998; Reno 1995, 1998; de Soysa 2000, 2002; Berdal and Malone 2000; Klare 2001; Azam and Hoeffler, 2002).⁴⁵ These arguments have found most resonance in the context of ‘resource wars’, where lootable primary commodities are recognised as providing sufficient incentive to those ‘doing well out of war’ to perpetuate it. However, they have

⁴⁴ The collective action problem refers to the notion that any public benefit is subject to the free-rider effect. That is, rational actors would choose not to participate in action in the pursuit of collective benefits, allowing others to bear the costs, yet still reaping the rewards. Olson (1965) is widely considered to be the classic text here. He states, ‘Large or “latent” groups have no incentive to act to obtain a collective good, because however valuable the collective good may be to the group as a whole, it does not offer the individual any incentive... to bear in any other way the costs of the necessary collective action’ (1965: 50-51).

⁴⁵ There are significant differences and nuances to the various arguments which constitute this school of thought. A comprehensive review of these unfortunately remains outside the scope of this review.

become prolific in explaining mass participation in violence in other contexts and, in some cases, have engendered a reading of local level participation in ethnic violence as ‘banal’ and almost entirely criminalistic in nature. Autesserre (2010: 72), for example, asserts that efforts to explain the ‘local’ in violence tend to conflate it with ‘criminal.’ That is, that any attention paid to the micro-level, has largely been to assert its criminality. While these stark versions of greed theories remain popular, they have become far more nuanced in recent literature as scholars have explored how economic incentives and political grievances interact in conflict (for example, Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Berdal 2005; Korf 2005, 2006; Murshed and Tadjoeddin 2009; Keen 2012).⁴⁶ There are two dimensions of this broad school of thought with particular relevance to the Kenyan situation: the first highlights the ethnically-structured redistributive nature of the state in Africa; the second emphasises the predominance of politically-sponsored vigilantes and ethnic militias, and stresses the opportunities for immediate gain inherent in violence and disorder.

The first strand of thought straddles the groupist/individualist focus within the literature and, again, relates to the understanding that capturing the state and putting ‘our man’ in the presidential seat, is the ‘only way to eat’ (Cowen and Kanyinga 2002: 170) and the key means of securing the ‘ethnic slice at the expense of the total national pie’ (Englebert 200: 65). However, rather than framing this politics of the belly mentality primarily in groupist terms, as grievance and fear based arguments tend to, this body of literature emphasises the expectations of individual gain and benefit from a co-ethnic’s position of power. That is, benefits and resources are expected to trickle down to individuals at the grassroots from the highest echelons of the state and ‘politicians are seen primarily as

⁴⁶ Though, as has already been noted, even those works more commonly situated firmly on the greed side of the divide tend to afford some role to grievances. Collier (Collier et al. 2009), the key proponent of the greed school, has shifted his attention in more recent work, focusing on the feasibility of conflict rather than the stark greed-grievance dichotomy, for example.

personal distributors of private rather than public goods' (Mueller 2008: 200).⁴⁷ Thus, Azam (2001) argues that credible signs of a functioning redistributive system, such as the institution of members of various ethnic groups in high level public sector positions, which will facilitate the ethnic trickle-down effect, are an effective means of maintaining peace. However, if these signs are absent, then the ethnically-directed redistribution of state resources breeds 'destructive competition and conflict' (Tarimo 2010: 303). Local level actors are understood to follow their leaders unquestioningly in an effort to secure their individual material interests. Thus, the collective action problem is over-ridden by the notion that while the group still controls access to benefits, individuals participate in violence in the expectation of *private gain* through patronage networks.⁴⁸ This formulation of economic incentives and rational actor arguments most commonly enters analyses as a precipitating condition rather than as a direct cause of violence – as central to explaining the ease with which people can be mobilised by politicians, and as rationalising 'the lengths to which leaders and followers are willing to go to get their leader in power and the means they are willing to use to achieve their end' (Mueller 2008: 200; Kagwanja and Southall 2009: 272). Once again, while this argument does a good job of capturing and explaining the macro-context of high stakes political competition, and renders the potential for a devolution into violence more explicable, it obscures the complexities and nuances of political support and grassroots action, and presents an overly materialist understanding of local level motivation. As shall be highlighted in Chapter Five, there is a strong recognition amongst many local level actors of 'how little trickles down to the worse off through the patronage network' (Williams 1987: 639), and their support for politicians is more complicated than a simplistic expectation of individualised material benefit. Moreover, ethnicised political support can be

⁴⁷ This neo-patrimonial literature is explored in more depth in Chapter Five.

⁴⁸ Early rational choice theorists, notably Olson (1965), Tullock (1971, 1974) and Silver (1974), have identified this nuance.

problematised and disrupted as local level actors debate, contest and negotiate the most effective means of securing their futures. Thus, participation in violence cannot simply be assumed from the macro-context of an ethnicised, high stakes, zero-sum political arena.

The second dimension of this body of literature departs from the notion that elites whip up mass inter-ethnic tensions and hatreds, mobilising and inciting large numbers of ordinary people to participate in violence, and argues that ethnic wars are in fact more commonly carried out by ‘small – sometimes very small – bands of opportunistic marauders recruited by political leaders and operating under their general guidance.’ (Mueller 2000: 42). That is, politicians recruit ethnic militias and vigilante groups to carry out violence for political ends.⁴⁹ Scholars often argue, then, that individuals recruited into these militias are ‘indistinguishable from bandits or pirates’ (Grossman 1999: 269), and participation in conflict is essentially equated with rent-seeking and criminality (Neary 1997). Militias are portrayed as being made up of unemployed youths who see an opportunity for a regular salary, for access to food and drink, and for immediate material gain through looting and other criminal behaviour (Mueller 2000: 20; Prunier 1995: 232; Servant 2007: 523). Africanist scholars have additionally situated this reward system within the broader rubric of patronage; Boone (2011: 1327-1328), for example, states that in the Kenyan state-sponsored clashes of 1990s, ‘the process of expelling landholders and expropriating their farms generated selective incentives for participants in the process of ethnic cleansing’ as land seized from settlers was redistributed. De Smedt (2008: 595) similarly asserts that ‘rewards can also be indirect, more substantial, or long-term’ and he points to the pervasive, albeit unsubstantiated, rumours that Raila Odinga pays rent for many of his supporters in Kibera.

⁴⁹ Some scholars who are more closely associated with collective-fear explanations of violence similarly highlight the role of vigilantes, militias and thugs in helping to construct this fear. For example, Tang suggests that elites mobilise a small fraction of the population, such as vigilante groups, who unleash violence which then generates spirals of hatred and fear (Tang 2011: 536). Posen (1993: 33) similarly argues that violent actions by small bands of fanatics can magnify initial fears within the wider populace by confirming them.

This instrumentalisation of disorder through the direction of ethnic militias has been well-documented in the Kenyan context (for example, Klopp 2001; Kagwanja 2001, 2003, 2006; Anderson 2002; Katumanga 2005; Laakso 2007; Servant 2007; Mueller 2008) and is most commonly traced back to Moi's attempts to secure his position following the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992. It is argued that these groups are, and have been, widely used to disrupt opposition rallies, intimidate politicians and their supporters, and to carry out ethnic cleansing operations in order to displace opposition supporters and prevent them from voting. As the violence progresses, it is argued, ordinary people not affiliated with these militias join the opportunistic melee and acts of looting and plundering become increasingly common (Keen 1998: 36). This literature has become far more nuanced in some of the recent Kenyanist works emerging in the wake of the post-election violence. Scholars have pointed to the uncontrollable proliferation and diffusion of extra-state violence in the country (Mueller 2008: 187), and to the ways in which Kenyans have been socialised into violence (Ndung'u 2010: 111), arguing that this environment not only facilitated the top-down mobilisation of gangs and vigilante groups by politicians, but also led to the emergence of more bottom-up spontaneous and retaliatory violence (Kagwanja and Southall 2009: 271). These are important observations which situate the violence within its social context and which have the potential to shift the focus from the level of the elite alone. However, the concentration upon organised gangs, vigilante groups, ethnic or tribal militias, political goon squads, personal armies, 'elite stormtroopers' (Kagwanja 2009: 370), and 'hired thugs' (Brown 2003: 69) still has a tendency of focusing upon mobilisation from above; it simplifies the nature of political campaign groups, it overstates the criminality and banality of the conflict, and it has the effect of exculpating the 'ordinary' man and woman. Kagwanja (2009: 378), for example, suggests that:

Violence in Nairobi slums was more or less a throwback to earlier wars by gangs such as Mungiki, Taliban, Bagdad Boys and Kamjesh... In the ensuing chaos, criminal thugs overwhelmed and usurped the role of the police and took over specific areas in slums and rural areas as new frontiers of robbery and killing.

Thus, these accounts, while undoubtedly capturing an element of violence at the local level, are subject to a number of important criticisms. Firstly, there is a tendency to focus primarily upon highly organised, ethnically-based, and politically-directed gangs, militias and vigilantes in political campaigning and violence, at the expense of the more amorphous and inclusive elements of violent ethnic politics evident in 2007-2008. The types of militias used to intimidate and displace opposition supporters in incidents of pre-election violence in the 1990s do not always translate neatly into the 2007-2008 context. My own research suggests that the youth groups attached to politicians during the 2007 campaigns were often less centralised and cohesive than the various *jeshi*⁵⁰ of earlier years, with a more casual, fluid, and often ethnically heterogeneous membership (see Chapter Five for a further discussion).⁵¹ Secondly, this instrumentalist interpretation of ethnic violence as the ‘joint product of political manipulation and organized thuggery’ (Brubaker and Laitin 2004: 98) is simplistic to the point of being distorting. Ethnicity is largely absent from these accounts, save from being a source of patronage; indeed, the conceptualisation of participants in violence as primarily ‘homo economicus’ (Cramer 2002) fails to explain the peculiar intensity of ethnic violence, and risks reducing ‘naked evil to ultimate banality’ (Green 1999: 35). As Horowitz (1985: 140) asserts, ‘a bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory.’ Finally, despite their focus upon individual motivation and participation, these accounts remain very much a top-down affair, in which violence is understood as orchestrated and

⁵⁰ The militias attached to politicians in Kenya are often referred to as *jeshi*, meaning ‘army’ and many of these groups incorporate this within their names, for example *jeshi la Mzee* (army of the elders), *jeshi la Embakasi* (army of Embakasi) and so on.

⁵¹ This is of course not to suggest that more organised groups played no role in the 2007 elections or in the violent aftermath, only to point out that an exclusive focus upon these militias obscures other important players and can mischaracterise the gangs of youths which surround politicians during their campaigns.

directed from above by political elites, rebel leaders, or centralised gangs, and the ordinary man or woman is either absent from the analysis or is presented as simply following out of economic need or greed. Yet, as has already been stated, local level actors participate in ethnic violence in far more nuanced, complex and ambiguous ways than is afforded by these reductive explanations.

Conclusion: The Limitations of Existing Explanations

The key theories identified and discussed above are, for the most part, compatible with each other, and their synthesis has often produced well-founded and valuable explanations of ethnic violence. Indeed, throughout this thesis I draw upon and interweave these theories in my own analysis of the Kenyan post-election crisis, and my conclusions are seldom entirely in opposition to existing explanations. However, invaluable as these theories are, they suffer from the same problem of perspective, and as a result their fusion can only take us so far in developing a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of ethnic violence. The predominantly top-down, macro-level perspective obscures the ambiguous, complex, and often contradictory processes of identity construction, and the empirical dynamics of violence on the ground, and as such oversimplifies the nature of ethnic conflict. The criticisms of each branch of the literature identified and highlighted throughout this review can be drawn together into two overarching problems within the field: the absence of local level agency and the obscuration of multi-vocality. With regards to the former, the overwhelmingly historical approach to identity construction fails to explore the ways in which ordinary people produce, invoke, enact and experience ethnicity in the present, and the tendency towards elite-centric explanations of conflict affords insufficient agency to people at the local level in their participation in, and navigation of, violent contexts. People do not simply respond

unthinkingly and unquestioningly to macro-contexts and elite rhetoric, but are active agents in negotiating their own circumstances. As such, we cannot *assume* participation in violence along particular cleavage lines simply from an elucidation of the macro-context of inter-group tension and conflict. Secondly, and relatedly, by taking the ethnic group as a cohesive and coherent unit of analysis in times of conflict, with clearly defined grievances, fears, and hostilities, existing explanations fail to appreciate the multi-vocality of ethnic identity. Rather, they create notions of a singularly understood and commonly perceived ‘other’ (Tronvoll 2005: 236), which is a drastic oversimplification of local processes and inter-ethnic relations. As Bayart (2005: 109) has argued in his extensive examination of ‘cultural’ identity, the notion of ethnic totalities and coherences is an illusion, and ‘what we need to do is to express indeterminism, incompleteness, multiplicity and polyvalence.’ Thus, the aerial view is a distorting lens through which to explore ethnic violence, and a model of conflict which examines the relationship between micro-dynamics and macro-contexts can offer a more nuanced and accurate reflection of this complex and important phenomenon.

Chapter Two:

Negotiating the Field:

Conducting Sensitive Research in a Post-Conflict Divided Society

Introduction

Dejected and frustrated following a particularly difficult day in the field, I was sitting in a small Somali *hoteli* in Eldoret town, sharing a plate of *pilau* with my research assistant, Nusrah. Noting my demeanour, he leant over the table and very quietly said, ‘The research you’re doing, you know, it’s not easy. This kind of thing, it needs much more intelligence.’ In the many conversations and discussions between the two of us, in which we planned, organised, problematised, reflected upon and rearranged our negotiation of the field, this sentiment was expressed frequently. The challenges of conducting sensitive research in difficult situations are many and varied, and while they are beginning to be explicitly explored by a number of scholars working in diverse contexts (see for example, Sluka 1990; Lee 1995; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Smyth and Robinson 2001; Porter et al. 2005; Sriram et al. 2009), there remains a ‘dearth of academic literature’ (Thomson 2010: 19) surrounding the practicalities of conducting such research. A key aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the value of more local level empirical research in the study of ethnic violence, arguing that such analyses can both broaden and deepen our understanding of the phenomenon. Consequently, further honest engagement with the practical realities of fieldwork is needed to refine the strategies used to negotiate these difficult field settings. This chapter reflects upon my own fieldwork experience, examining its successes and its failures, its strengths and its limitations. Through an analysis of issues relating to access, security,

veracity, and researcher subjectivity, I suggest that a collaborative partnership between outside researchers and inside assistants can facilitate a more successful navigation of the ethical and methodological challenges encountered when conducting sensitive research in a post-conflict, divided society. By accepting the necessity of surrendering some control over the research, and by working with local assistants, outside researchers are better able to understand and to manoeuvre in difficult research settings.

The Problem of Sensitive Research

It is often claimed that sensitive research presents unique methodological and ethical challenges, yet the diversity of disciplines and topics that have been encompassed within the rubric of *sensitive* research raises questions as to its very nature. What makes research sensitive and for whom is it so? Is sensitivity absolute or relative? Fixed or contingent? Such questions are important as they speak directly to the problems encountered and the ways in which they can be managed. Renzetti and Lee (1993: 5) offer the following definition of sensitivity:

A sensitive topic is one that potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or researched the collection, holding and/or dissemination of research data.

The problems associated with sensitivity are multifarious. They are related not only to the physical dangers, but also to the emotional consequences of the research; they can affect both the researcher as well as the researched; they can be real or perceived; and they can affect the research at all stages, from design through implementation to dissemination (Brewer 1993: 128). In the case of my own research, some of the potential risks were, to an extent, identifiable in the early planning stages, and could be minimised before arriving in the field. The focus on individual experiences of, and involvement in, recent violence, for example,

undoubtedly presents a potential risk to the emotional well-being of participants. Remembering the horrific acts witnessed, recalling the loss of loved ones, and, moreover, recollecting one's own personal involvement in violence, can be emotionally stressful. The narrative-style interview served to minimize this risk as participants were in control of the interview, and they were able to select the experiences they felt comfortable sharing with the researcher. Similarly, the interest in individuals' active involvement in violence could generate fears of being 'identified, stigmatized or incriminated in some way' (Renzetti and Lee 1993: 6) and, as such, required very careful, discreet handling and dissemination of data. In light of this, the decision not to tape interviews or to record the names of interviewees, was taken and strategies of holding data securely were adopted.¹

However, while there are often elements of research projects which are inherently sensitive, these are limited, and outside researchers can easily misunderstand the nature, or the degree of risk posed by their research. The sensitivity of a topic is highly subjective and so the challenge is to assess 'risk factors from the perspective of the persons who will be affected, remembering that not everyone perceives things as the researcher would' (Sieber 1993: 19). What one person sees as risky, may be considered harmless by someone else, and an issue which is deemed to be unthreatening at one moment, may become highly charged in another; sensitivity is not fixed or static, but rather it varies across time and space according to social and political context. As such, constant attention must be paid to sensitivities throughout the duration of the fieldwork and the research design must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate and adapt to emerging and unanticipated threats. I suggest throughout this chapter that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for an outside researcher alone to be

¹ It should be noted, however, that the nature of the threat was misunderstood at this stage. It was initially thought that the research data would need to be protected from police and other state officials who would find it of interest, and that participants would be concerned with government authorities discovering their actions during the violence. However, interviewees were more afraid of reprisals from other community members and from International Criminal Court prosecutors. These fears generated some additional challenges to those anticipated in the early stages of research design which are explored throughout the chapter.

able to identify, understand and negotiate the potential threats of the research in the absence of a collaborative relationship with inside assistants. Not only are insiders better equipped to identify and manage the risks of the research at the data gathering stage, but they are also better able to monitor how the research is being perceived by members of the researched community, and to identify any emerging and unanticipated threats. Specific events which occur in the field, for example, can drastically alter the way in which the research is perceived, and therefore, how, and indeed whether, it can be continued. Belousov et al. (2007: 164) indicate that following the murder of a key gatekeeper during the course of their fieldwork, relations with respondents ‘underwent a noticeable change’ from active interest to bare tolerance. In my own fieldwork, the suspension of the leading Kalenjin MP William Ruto² and the resulting reaction in Eldoret town and the surrounding villages, led to several of my local contacts warning me to ‘lay low for the next few days’; in effect, the topic of my research was seen to be more sensitive due to the highly charged political context at that moment. Such events and the subsequent reactions of the researched community cannot be foreseen, but they have a significant impact upon the sensitivity of the research. In some cases the researcher may be able to negotiate the new uncertainties and fears, in other cases they may not, and the field site may need to be abandoned. Stanko and Lee (2003: 3) draw attention to this problem of identifying threats and dangers:

The kind of threat posed by a particular piece of research inheres less in the specific topic and more in the relationship between that topic and the social context – defined both broadly and narrowly, within which the research is conducted. It is not unusual for the sensitive nature of an apparently innocuous topic to become apparent once research is underway, or for a researcher to approach a topic with caution only to find

² On 14 February 2010, Luo Prime Minister Raila Odinga suspended the leading Kalenjin politician, William Ruto, on suspicion of his involvement in a corruption scandal. Following the announcement, tensions increased in Eldoret town centre as Kalenjin youth gathered in the streets. Roadblocks were reportedly set up in the Eldoret North District and members of the Luo community were arriving in town claiming that they had been chased away by their Kalenjin neighbours. The General Service Unit (GSU) was deployed and tensions were further cooled when President Mwai Kibaki reinstated Ruto later that same day on the basis that the Prime Minister did not have the authority to suspend members of the cabinet. I was in Eldoret town on this day and observed the increasing tensions.

that initial fears about its ‘sensitivity’ have been misplaced. It may well be that a study seen as threatening by one group will be thought innocuous by another.

Thus, it is important to emphasise here that sensitivity is neither absolute nor objective; rather, it is highly subjective and situational, and its nuances and the degrees to which it is felt cannot be wholly grasped by an outside researcher. Insider knowledge is fundamental to the safety and success of potentially sensitive research. The remainder of the chapter will highlight the complexities of my own research, demonstrating that constant attention to the ways in which the research was being perceived through frequent discussions with inside assistants and other local contacts, enabled some of the methodological and ethical difficulties to be managed and negotiated according to the context.

Researchers, Collaborators and Assistants

While a great deal of attention has been paid to debates concerning the relative virtues and drawbacks of insider- versus outsider-researchers, the crucial role played by local fieldwork assistants is seldom afforded a thorough and detailed analysis within the literature.³

As Sanjek (1993: 13) states:

While professional ethnographers – usually white, mostly male – have normally assumed full authorship for their ethnographic products, the remarkable contribution of these assistants – mainly persons of colour – is not widely enough appreciated or understood.

Indeed, ‘the anthropologist’s assistant is a figure who seems suspiciously absent from ethnographic accounts. The conventional myth seeks to depict the battle-scarred anthropologist as a lone figure wandering into a village, settling in and “picking up the language” in a couple of months’ (Barley 1983: 44). The lack of attention to these local level

³ The excellent elaboration of Whyte’s relationship with his ‘collaborator’ (1955 [1943]: 301), Doc, in his seminal work *Street Corner Society* is a notable exception; as are the more recent contributions by Scott et al. (2006), Yeh (2006), Maloney and Hammett (2007), and Turner (2010).

assistants is further reflected in our difficulties in labelling the relationship, as these individuals seem to shift somewhere in the spaces between key informant, research assistant, collaborator, guide and friend (cf. Crick 1992: 177). Nevertheless, despite this problem of conceptualisation, these individuals can be of fundamental importance to the success or failure of the research.

In my own fieldwork, this multifarious role was adopted by Nusrāh, a young, popular and charismatic Nubian man who lived in Makina village, Kibera. He was initially introduced to me by his sister, Hawa, a local NGO-worker with whom I had made contact prior to arriving in Kenya. Having discussed my research aims and objectives with her, Hawa indicated that such a topic of study required a youth⁴ to help navigate the area safely and to mobilise the different types of participants the research necessitated; the next day she introduced me to Nusrāh. Initially, he acted as a guide and key informant, showing me around Kibera and talking freely about ethnicity and politics in Kenya. Gradually, his role became more and more complex; not only was he a collaborator, becoming increasingly involved in the design of the research and advising in issues related to access and security, much like Doc in Whyte's *Street Corner Society*, but he also took on the role of assistant/interpreter, acting as translator during interviews, asking questions, as well as reflecting upon the plausibility and veracity of some of the material. We had frequent discussions about the progress of the research, talking about what was working and what was not, and we each suggested alterations to its design and implementation in response to changing contexts. Indeed, the data collected is as much a product of his interactions with, and presence in, the field as it is mine.

⁴ The term 'youth' tends to be used in a gendered fashion in Kenya, usually denoting a male anywhere between the age of 18 to 35, and a similar usage is employed throughout this thesis. Nusrāh was 28 at the time of the fieldwork.

Additionally, local youths were employed in order to navigate the different field sites and micro-territories, and their role was equally complex. To an extent, they similarly contributed to the design and implementation of the research within their area. They were also key informants, discussing the local dynamics of the election campaigns and violent aftermath with us, and they were assistants in that they had specific duties, ‘payment for services and an almost contractual arrangement’ (Crick 1992: 177). Additionally, on occasion, it was necessary for these field assistants to act as translators for interviewees who were not proficient in Kiswahili or English, and who preferred to speak in their vernacular language. While it is difficult to pinpoint a singular or precise role, the involvement of these local assistants was invaluable.

Access

Debates regarding insider/outsider researchers have frequently highlighted the relative advantages enjoyed by insiders in terms of accessing the field. Their pre-existing social networks, proficiency in the language, and familiarity with the local social and political context can facilitate quick and easy entry into the community, and can enable them to ‘collect information and monitor issues such as safety’ more easily (Smyth 2005: 17; cf. Hermann 2001; Sherif 2001; Chavez 2008). On the other hand, the difficulties encountered by outside researchers, whilst not limited to sensitive research, are certainly amplified by it. Questions are frequently raised concerning the researcher’s identity and intent, and the suspicion with which they are often confronted can create serious problems. This section explores how these were managed during my own fieldwork, suggesting that ‘the success of field researchers is determined in large part by their ability to develop trust with local counterparts’ (Mertus 2009: 3).

Many, if not most, scholars conducting research on sensitive topics have highlighted the importance of trust in mobilising participants. While some level of trust is essential in all disciplines, its importance is further accentuated by potentially sensitive research. Studies of deviant behaviour, from domestic violence to organised crime, institutional corruption to large-scale conflict, are often regarded with unease and suspicion by researched communities, presenting a significant challenge in accessing field sites and mobilising participants. Indeed, one of the key challenges encountered by outside researchers is the management of the oft-heard accusation that they are spies. Such allegations are common – indeed Sluka (2007: 264) suggests that ‘it is difficult to find an anthropologist who has done fieldwork who has not encountered this suspicion’ – but they can have serious implications for the willingness of individuals to participate in the research. I myself encountered this suspicion, and the somewhat unfortunate timing of my fieldwork only served to fuel these rumours and this wariness. Throughout the duration of my time in the field, the International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, was conducting investigations in Kenya and building a case against key figures suspected of organising and funding the post-election violence. During this period, key steps towards the consolidation of a prosecution case were taken, Ocampo himself made two official visits to the country, and media attention remained high. In short, the investigations of the ICC were continuing in a decidedly visible manner and they were the topic of much conversation and debate among people at the local level. As such, an outside researcher, asking questions about the details of events of violence on the ground, was bound to raise some gossip and chatter among researched communities. Rumours that I was an ICC investigator, a government spy, or more perplexingly, a CIA agent, made some individuals and communities uneasy about assisting with, or participating in, the research. The source of their fears varied. Some believed that the ICC was looking to build cases against ordinary people; some feared reprisals from neighbours who had been

heavily involved in the violence; and some were concerned that members of their ethnic group would accuse them of betraying the ethnic community by assisting the ICC in developing a case against ‘their man.’⁵ Thus, fears concerning the identity and intentions of the researcher must be allayed, and it is in building trust that the key challenge, therefore, lies.⁶

It is frequently assumed that ethnographic studies, particularly those sensitive in nature, are consequently very time-consuming as high levels of trust must be developed and established between the researcher and the researched community. It is this time-investment and ‘sustained trust period’ (Norman 2009: 86) that is often understood as the most important factor in determining the success of fieldwork on sensitive topics. Brewer (1993: 130-131) states:

Ethnographic research has special qualities suited to dealing with controversial topics in sensitive locations. It entails a gradual and progressive contact with respondents, which is sustained over a long period, allowing rapport to be established slowly with respondents over time.... To be successful... ethnographic research demands considerable time commitment. This is true especially with sensitive topics where the researcher’s penetration into the field takes longer and, once successful, continually needs to be reinforced by intensive contact.

Such techniques seem to require a near-exclusive engagement with a localised, bounded geographical space in order to allow sufficient time for trust to develop. However, such a geographically constrained focus was problematic for my interest in understanding the variations in violence dynamics across the country: My research questions demanded a multi-sited ethnographic approach. The limited amount of time afforded to researchers of multiple

⁵ Methodological challenges and difficulties are often revealing and attention should be paid to them. In this case, the strong emotive attachments felt towards the ethnic leader, and the fear of intra-ethnic reprisal for ‘betraying’ the community, speaks to the entrenchment of ethnic politics, and the importance of intra-ethnic policing in disciplining behaviour at the local level. These issues are further explored in later chapters.

⁶ A further ethical issue was raised as a result of the perception of my affiliation with the ICC. While in some cases this perception generated difficulties in accessing communities, in others it actually facilitated it. Whilst I was very careful to be clear about my status as a student researcher with no affiliation to the ICC, it was clear that there were some interviewees who continued to believe that this was simply a cover story. Thus, the researcher is not in complete control of how the research is perceived and in light of this, it raises the question as to the ethics of interviewing someone who is believed to hold misconceived ideas about the research, even after a thorough explanation has been given.

field sites can raise questions over whether sufficient levels of trust can be established. However, I suggest that in such research, a different form of trust relationship can be fostered that does not depend upon the researcher's direct relationship with members of the researched community, but rather upon that between local assistants and their community. That is, the researcher must establish and utilise *networks of trust* through partnerships with insider-assistants. Polsky's (1967: 129) notion of 'snowballing' is very similar in its suggestion that it is the researcher must get an introduction with one informant, 'who will vouch for you with others, who in turn will vouch for you with still others.'

Many researchers make mention of the importance of having an insider to 'vouch for who you are and what you're doing' (Jacobs 2006: 159), but the implications of this are seldom explored in detail. Sixmith et al. (2003: 584), for example, suggest that introductions from fellow community members can foster the perception of the researcher as 'a friend of a friend.' Strooka (2008: 262), similarly, declares that his own attempts at accessing youth gangs in Peru were largely unsuccessful until he was introduced to Daniel, a former gang leader who became 'my first research assistant and a key intermediary in the process of establishing rapport with the local *manchas*.' Indeed, gaining the trust of an insider, with an already established 'trustworthy and legitimate social network' (Chavez 2008: 482) appears, in many cases, to lead to an extension of that trust to the researcher. Certainly, sensitive research benefits from intensive and extensive interactions, but I suggest that this need not necessarily be directly between the researcher and the researched; the former can rather concentrate on building and sustaining trust with research assistants. By fostering relationships with a small number of insider-assistants, the researcher can establish 'trust by association' (Norman 2009: 79) in a shorter space of time, consequently enabling him or her to work in multiple field sites.

Access to field sites in my own fieldwork was highly dependent upon the trust which had been built over intensive, and inevitably, as time went by, extensive, interaction with Nusrah. I spent long days in Kibera in the first few months, socialising with him and his friends after interviews, consolidating our friendship. During this time he frequently questioned me about what the research was, why I was doing it and what had sparked my interest in Kenya in particular. It was essential that I was entirely open and honest in my responses to allay any of Nusrah's initial suspicions. It is through this relationship that trust was subsequently extended to other assistants in each field site and, consequently, to the members of these communities. In Kawangware and Mathare, the local partners with whom we worked were good friends of Nusrah and as such their trust in him was extended to me almost immediately, whilst in Nakuru and Eldoret more time had to be spent establishing friendships with local residents. In the case of the former, the loose connections between our host, Abdul, and Nusrah,⁷ facilitated a trusting relationship and our intensive interactions with him through living in his home and socialising with him and his friends after work consolidated our relationship very quickly. It is through his personal networks that we were introduced to our local partners in each area of Nakuru. Eldoret was perhaps the most challenging area in which to establish connections. The home in which we were staying was located outside of any identified field site and the family consisted of two children, their mother - who was in full-time employment - and the housemaid. As such, they did not have any useful contacts in our desired field sites. In this situation Nusrah's charismatic, outgoing and likeable personality was of fundamental importance in establishing friendships with local people. In the first week, he spent time meeting people in Eldoret town, establishing rapport with some local market vendors and their customers. He would sit and chew *miraa* with two

⁷ Abdul's family lived in the same village as Nusrah in Kibera, he was introduced as a 'fellow Nubian', his wife schooled with Nusrah's wife, and members of his extended family were loosely connected to Nusrah's family.

individuals in particular, spending long hours of the day talking with them. After several days I was introduced to them and we spent the remainder of the first week sitting and talking at their stalls. Indeed, simply ‘hanging out’ with these individuals, engaging them in honest, open and free conversation enabled us to develop friendships relatively quickly. As a result, we were able to use their social networks to access the various field sites around Eldoret.⁸

Thus, through an establishment of trust with a small handful of individuals, the challenges often associated with access in such research were largely overcome. Before leaving for the field, I had envisaged access and mobilisation of participants as a potential problem. When Nusrah first suggested that we could enter multiple field sites with ease, I thought it was a somewhat naive expectation. However, by placing my own trust in Nusrah’s knowledge of social relations and context in Kenya, I was able to access a large number of interviewees with far greater ease than I had anticipated. Indeed, my experience is reminiscent of Whyte’s (1955[1943]: 292-3) first meeting with Doc when he expressed his anxiety about making a good impression with the residents of his field site:

[Whyte] ‘Now I’m going to try to fit in all right, but, if at any time you see I’m getting off on the wrong foot, I want you to tell me about it.’

[Doc] ‘Now we’re being too dramatic. You won’t have any trouble. You come in as my friend. When you come in like that, at first everybody will treat you with respect.’ ... At the time I found it hard to believe that I could move in as easily as Doc had said with his sponsorship. But that indeed was the way it turned out.

Thus, networks of trust rely on the researcher’s relationship with key local collaborators, informants or assistants. It is through the gradual development and sustained trust relations with these individuals that access to researched communities can be eased.

However, if access to field sites is so heavily reliant upon these individuals, then their position and popularity within the researched community is also of fundamental importance.

⁸ Additionally, these contacts had an influence on the choice of field sites, highlighting areas which were hot spots of violence, and places which remained relatively calm, and advising us on issues related to security and access.

Local impressions and perceptions of researchers are largely derived from the people with whom they associate and as such, the characteristics and identity of assistants must be carefully considered (Berreman 2007: 149). In an ethnically divided society such as Kenya, and particularly one which has experienced recent violence, the ethnic identity of assistants can be important. It was extremely advantageous that Nusrah was Nubian as he was largely seen to be relatively impartial by all participants,⁹ and therefore was an acceptable presence in interview situations. However, the ethnic identity of other local assistants, whose key role was the mobilisation of local interviewees, was of some consequence and had to be considered carefully. In ethnic enclaves local assistants were always members of the dominant community, whilst in ethnically mixed areas the identity of the assistant appeared to be largely unimportant.¹⁰ The popularity of the assistant, on the other hand, was critical in both types of field site. It was essential that the assistant could mobilise a diverse range of people, including men and women, youths and elders from the various ethnic communities residing in the area, in order to gather different perspectives and stories.¹¹ Moreover, the popularity of the assistant is intricately tied to the issues of trust already addressed.

Thus, it is important that research assistants are ‘well thought of by the other participants in the system’ (Walker and Lidz 1977: 115), and mistakes in the choice of assistant can be devastating, both methodologically and ethically. In my own research I made several errors in this respect, which limited the amount and quality of data collected and, in one case, actually played a significant role in rendering the site unworkable. In this latter

⁹ Largely due to the fact that the Nubian community does not have significant representation at the highest levels of political competition.

¹⁰ This in itself is interesting and speaks to the importance of socio-spatial dynamics in shaping the nature of ethnic interaction in Kenya. This is further elaborated upon in Chapter Three, and its significance in informing political behaviour and involvement in violence is highlighted throughout the thesis.

¹¹ In all field sites – with the exception of Huruma in Eldoret – our assistants were young men. This was deliberate. Men were better able to mobilise the local youth who were actively involved in the violence, but they were also able to recruit women and elders with relative ease. However, had female assistants been employed there would have been a much clearer gender bias as their ability to mobilise male interviewees was diminished. Indeed, even in Huruma our assistant enlisted the aid of some youths to enable her to mobilise the boys in the area who had been actively involved in the violence.

case, a local contact in Nairobi had recommended his in-laws who lived in Maili Nne, Eldoret as potential assistants in the village. Upon meeting them, they insisted upon arranging an appointment with the Chief, who, in turn, assigned the village elder to accompany us around the village. The fact that our local partners were elders created a methodological problem in that they were less able to mobilise younger interviewees. However, further ethical problems were raised by our association with these individuals. The mother-in-law and the village elder were clearly intimidating presences in the community, and the latter's refusal to leave the room during interviews created problems of privacy and confidentiality. Moreover, it became increasingly obvious that residents felt obliged to participate in the research. Fortunately, the narrative-style interview enabled them to give a short and generalised statement, which I insisted met the requirements of my research; however, the ethical problems remained and it is for these reasons, as well as others which are elaborated upon in the next section, that Maili Nne was abandoned after two days and the data already collected was discarded. Thus, errors in judgement such as these demonstrate the limitations of relying upon local counterparts for establishing trust and mobilising participants.

It is important to investigate the spatial variations in the dynamics of violence and it is only through a multi-sited approach that this can be achieved. Thus, researchers must develop alternative techniques to a prolonged stay in one field site in order to overcome the challenges of access. Whilst relying on local assistants is not wholly unproblematic, their pre-existing networks of trust can be utilised by outside researchers to enable quicker access. Thus, in a similar approach to that of Jacobs (2006: 163), 'I infiltrate by proxy, riding the fieldworker's credibility and coattails with a tight grip.'

Security

The physical risks and dangers involved in sensitive research, particularly when it is conducted in difficult and violent situations, can place significant constraints upon the researcher's control of ethical decisions, and can have a substantial influence upon the methodological choices undertaken in the field. Furthermore, sensitive research often highlights the limitations of existing ethical positions (Renzetti and Lee 1993: 8). The rising interest in understanding cultures of violence, coupled with the increasing number of scholars conducting fieldwork in difficult situations, makes attention to the methods of minimizing risks all the more important and urgent (Kovats-Bernat 2002: 2). However, while there is an emerging body of literature which calls for more attention to be paid to the strategies of negotiating dangerous fields, it remains 'quite limited in extent' (Belousav et al. 2007: 156). This section explores how potential risks were identified, monitored and minimised in my own fieldwork, arguing that the safe negotiation of the field was highly dependent upon the knowledge and skill of insider-assistants, and a willingness on my part not only to be flexible in my research design, but also to accept the necessity of relinquishing some of my control over the research.

The AAA 'Code of Ethics' and 'Principles of Professional Responsibility' maintain that researchers have a responsibility to ensure the safety and security of both themselves and those with whom they associate. However, this is highly problematic; not only does it assume that the researcher is aware of and, indeed, fully capable of anticipating all the potential risks of the research, but it also implies that he or she has absolute control over the research environment. I argue here that these assumptions are deeply misleading and generate serious dilemmas for researchers, as their negotiation of the field comes into tension with some of the presuppositions of existing guidelines. Following my own experience, I am in full agreement with Nordstrom (1997: xvii) when she states that, 'our discipline would be well advised to

provide its researchers with a more realistic and critical methodology than I first took with me to the field.’

The importance of insider-knowledge in navigating dangerous fields cannot be overstated. Outside researchers face considerable problems identifying and anticipating the potential dangers of their fieldwork due to their ‘relative lack of knowledge of the context and relative inability to interpret cues’ (Smyth 2005: 17). Consequently they must engage in a collaborative partnership with insider-assistants who can facilitate their safe navigation of the field. Several researchers point to the value of insiders in their own fieldwork, suggesting that their advice, and indeed, presence, was essential to manoeuvring around the field safely and successfully. Pamela Nilan, for example, in her research on drug subcultures in nightclubs, was advised by a barman to employ a local guide to act as her bodyguard and informant:

The place was dangerous and I might get robbed or worse. He knew more than I did in his acknowledgement of the dangers to personal safety which arise for researchers... it was remarkable that as soon as I paired up with Wayan... I felt much less conspicuous and much more in control of the data collection possibilities (Nilan 2002: 377).

Similarly, Nordstrom (1997: xvii) admits that she was largely ignorant of the potential dangers she faced in her study of the Mozambique conflict, and states that ‘the foresight of those around me protected me from physical violence I had not anticipated.’ In the same way, Toros (2008: 287) declares that her safety was largely out of her control and lay, instead, in the hands of her interviewees; she claims that ‘they know the territory, the risks and the best way to carry out my research without getting anyone else hurt’, and Wood (2006: 380) additionally confesses that she was ‘too inexperienced and too naive’, and had much to learn from her assistants. My own experience was very similar. While I had anticipated some of the general risks associated with working in urban slums, such as robbery, and had envisaged that the sensitivity of the topic could present a risk to my interviewees and to myself, I misunderstood the nature of those risks, and was ignorant of the best strategies to circumvent

or minimise them. It was only through insiders, both assistants and interviewees alike, that I could gain some understanding of these issues.

The danger of being a target of robbery and attack, whilst being ever present, was relatively easily negotiated. Indeed, while I was a more likely target by virtue of being white and female, the threat of mugging is one faced by residents of these areas on a daily basis and their strategies of minimising this risk became intuitive and virtually second-nature. As time went by, after observing the situation and through my many conversations with local assistants, I grew increasingly aware of where and when I could walk in relative safety, and where and when I could not. For the most part, my security was safeguarded by my familiarity within a particular territory, and by virtue of the people with whom I associated.¹²

However, to my mind, robbery was far less threatening than the potential risks posed by the research itself.¹³ In this respect, I very quickly realised that my presuppositions about this threat were ill-conceived. I had imagined that the data I was gathering would be of interest to local authorities and, as such, that it was crucial to develop strategies to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of my interviewees and to prepare for the possibility of being asked to surrender my data to authorities. However, despite all my preparations for these risks, I had not anticipated much hostility from members of the researched communities themselves, perhaps with the exception of individual members of organised gangs such as Mungiki. In hindsight, this was extraordinarily naive and, as it turned out, this hostility

¹² Indeed, the points made here are revealing for three reasons. Firstly, the physical dangers of living in an urban slum are ever-present and are indicative of the everyday violence which underscores these settings. This is further discussed in Chapter Four. Secondly, my own feelings of comfort and discomfort in particular neighbourhoods, highlights the deeply territorialised nature of these spaces. The issue of territoriality is of central importance to the thesis as a whole and is interwoven throughout the following chapters. Finally, the issues of familiarity, popularity, friendship and deep social ties was a key factor in shaping the ways in which people participated in the post-election violence. This issue is explored in Chapter Seven.

¹³ I rarely carried anything of any real value whilst in the field; my greatest concern was that my data would be stolen and that this could place my interviewees in danger. It is for this reason that names were not recorded anywhere. I also instructed my assistants that should we be mugged, they should allow the thieves to take whatever we had and not retaliate. My assistants, and Nusrat in particular, seemed to feel a strong sense of responsibility for my protection and I was concerned that should we be attacked, they would react and risk being hurt themselves.

presented the greatest physical threat, both to me and to my interviewees. Moreover, these dangers were not fixed, but rather varied across time and space, making it very difficult for me to develop a clear understanding of when and where the risks were greatest.

Furthermore, the norm of informed consent, in its demands that participants understand the potential risks they run in participating in the research, erroneously assumes that the researcher is fully aware of all the potential risks. Yet more often than not, it is the interviewees themselves who are better able to assess the dangers of participation. Some of my interviewees, particularly self-confessed members of Mungiki, stated that they ran a great risk in talking to me, but were willing to participate in the research on the condition that the interview was conducted in a private place. Conversely, other interviewees were very comfortable being interviewed on the side of a street, or in a very public setting, despite my own reticence. Equally, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, sensitivity is not fixed and new dangers can emerge at any given time; people can become less willing to participate as they become aware of a new threat, and the researcher can find him- or herself at a greater risk of harm quite suddenly. Thus, while the researcher is certainly responsible for ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of research participants in the holding and dissemination of data,¹⁴ sometimes it is the participants themselves who are better equipped to identify the dangers of participation. Indeed, Kovats-Bernat's (2002: 7) suggestion of a 'reconfiguration of how we perceive our relationship with our informants' to one of 'mutual responsibility', seems more appropriate to my own experience than the 'colonial assumption' that I was 'fully equipped... to foresee the deadly consequences of participation in my study.' Moreover, I found it somewhat patronising and a little absurd that I should tell a member of a gang that I

¹⁴ In my own fieldwork, I did not record the names of interviewees and I did not tape interviews. All interviews were written by hand, word for word and later the same day were transcribed and stored on a password protected computer.

was not comfortable interviewing him or her because *I* felt that there was a risk to their security which they had not anticipated!

With regards to my own safety the risks associated with the research similarly waxed and waned according to context. There was a greater risk, for example, in communities which were particularly loyal to a specific politician, in ‘hotspots’ of the violence, and in areas controlled by an organised gang or vigilante group. Additionally, political events and tensions increased dangers in particular areas at certain times. As an outsider, then, it was difficult for me to recognise or anticipate where and when the research was likely to be met with increased hostility, and what the nature of that hostility might be. I relied very heavily on the knowledge of local assistants in this matter. When field sites were being selected, they offered advice on the possibility of working in particular areas, warned me of emerging threats resulting from events which occurred either at the national or local level, and suggested strategies that could help to minimise the dangers.

It is important to recognise, however, that there is a significant weakness in relying on the advice of insiders. While I firmly believe that erring on the side of caution is the best strategy, the prejudices and biases of insiders can play a significant role in their assessment of the level of danger, particularly in an ethnically divided society still recovering from conflict. For example, my attempts to access Kalenjin-dominated areas in the Rift Valley region were largely thwarted, as the majority of my local contacts warned me that discussing these issues with ‘that community’ in the heart of their homeland, would be exceptionally dangerous. I cannot say whether their perceptions of the risks were accurate or not, but disregarding their advice ‘seemed both dangerous and arrogant’ (Toros 2008: 287). As a result, however, my research is skewed by my failure to access Kalenjin-dominated villages in the area surrounding Eldoret.

Finally, it is important to note that incorporating members of the local community into the research team can further assist the researcher in monitoring emerging threats, and in evaluating how the researcher, and the research itself, is being perceived (Sixsmith et al. 586). Perhaps the greatest difficulty I encountered during my fieldwork was the management of rumours which emerged in each field site. Mostly, these revolved around the ‘inherently dangerous’ (Sluka 2007: 264) suspicion that I was a spy:

Every field-worker runs across a good deal of gossip, hearsay, slander, rumor and even character assassination, but they acquire inordinate importance in violent situations in which access to such information can make the difference between life and death, safety and injury (Robben and Nordstrom 1995: 15)

In my own experience, accessing this information was almost entirely dependent upon my local assistants. However, while it is important for researchers to pay attention to managing the impressions people have of them, the way in which the research is perceived is largely out of the researcher’s control. All that can be done is to explain any behaviours that have been deemed to be suspect, and monitor and evaluate the potential consequences of the rumours. Thus, the researcher must also accept that on occasion it may not be possible to manage perceptions, and in these circumstances the prudent course of action is to abandon the field site. In my own fieldwork this was the unfortunate result of our attempts to work in Maili Nne, Eldoret. While there were a number of reasons why we abandoned working here, the rumours circulating about our relationship with the ICC, in addition to Nusrah’s increasing suspicion that a particular group of youths were planning to attack us, as well as our mutual distrust in the partners with whom we were working, were the most significant.¹⁵

¹⁵ On the second day of working in this village, one of our assistants tried to elicit 10,000 shillings from us, stating, ‘You know, I know those boys down there in the interior area. They won’t like what we are doing here.’ Nusrah interpreted this as a thinly-veiled threat that should we not hand over the money, he would mobilise a group of Kalenjin from the neighbouring areas to come and attack us. Given the rumours of our association with the ICC, we felt that this was more than an empty threat. Thus, while the researcher must certainly engender the trust of research assistants and participants, in potentially dangerous field settings, where assistants largely ensure the safety of the researcher, issues of trust surely must extend both ways.

Thus, issues of security are particularly difficult for outside researchers to address alone. Insider-assistants and participants themselves can not only help to identify and anticipate potential threats and risks, but also to monitor and evaluate the situation on the ground. Additionally, their familiarity with the territory, and the people within it, enables them to develop more effective strategies for minimising risks. The researcher is undoubtedly responsible for protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, but the safety of all those involved in the research must surely be a collaborative, incorporative project in which there is a mutual responsibility to ensure security.

Authenticity and Veracity in Sensitive Research

The question of veracity, credibility, authenticity, and ‘truth’ is frequently encountered in sensitive research, and oral sources and narrative-style methods have elicited much criticism in the past for being vulnerable to falsehoods, lies and distortions. However, the value of narrative accounts ‘does not lie solely in the truthfulness of their content’ (Fujii 2010: 232), nor indeed, in the factual accuracy of their substance; rather, the facts and fictions that constitute personal truth (Atkinson 1998: 20), the very distortions, exaggerations and inconsistencies, are important data in themselves.

The credibility of oral sources is a different credibility... the importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts, but rather in its diversion from them... Therefore, there are no ‘false’ oral sources... ‘untrue’ statements are still psychologically ‘true’ (Portelli 1981: 100).¹⁶

Indeed, this thesis is intimately concerned with understanding the social constructions of reality and truth in its assumption that beliefs and perceptions can be catalysts for violent action or inaction (cf. Bwenge 2005: 95).

¹⁶ For further discussion of the credibility and ‘truth’ of oral sources see the symbolic interactionist writings of Shaw (1966); Bertaux (1981); Prus (1996); Atkinson (1998); Plummer (2001).

However, what is perhaps more problematic and worthy of further attention here, is the difficulties in establishing authenticity in sensitive research, that is establishing whether the narrative is ‘genuine to the interlocutor’s own sense of truth and reality’ (Robben 1995: 97). While surely not all interviewees are liars, some are, and the distortions, exaggerations and half-truths which constitute their narratives must be identified and reflected upon. Much of the methodological literature implies that through building rapport with interviewees over time and through repeat interviewing which engenders ‘relaxed interactions’ (Thomson 2010: 31), deceptions and fabrications can be minimised and the data is more authentic.

The researcher who uses such methods relies on sustained or intensive interactions with those studied as a way of establishing trustful relations between researcher and researched, in these circumstances, it is assumed, barriers to the researcher’s presence are eventually removed to reveal the hidden, the deviant or the tabooed. (Renzetti and Lee 1993: 101).

This chapter has already argued that such time investment is not essential to the establishment of sufficient trust and rapport to facilitate access. In the same way, I suggest here, that it does not necessarily engender more ‘honest’ and ‘authentic’ data. Indeed, my own experience supports Jacobs’ (2006: 164) argument that, in fact, ‘social distance between researcher and respondent empowers the latter to speak freely.’ Several interviewees, following the interview, indicated that the experience had been a cathartic one, as they had not felt able to share their story of the violence completely before, largely because they were concerned that there might be some reprisals if friends, neighbours, or co-ethnics discovered the nature of some of their actions during the violence. Indeed, the value of social distance was explicitly articulated by Nusrah on a number of occasions. He would tell me many stories about his own life and background and he would frequently claim that he had not shared the information with anyone else before. One day I asked him why he told me these stories, but would not share them with his family and friends. He replied, ‘You are not from here. There can be no harm in telling you such things because you are not from here, you can do nothing

to me.’ In the same way, he would ensure that our local assistants were not present during interviews, explaining to them that people might be less honest if someone else from their neighbourhood could listen to their narrative. I recall a conversation he had with Charles, our assistant in 4B, Mathare, who was particularly eager to listen to some of the interviews. He explained that ‘maybe he [*the interviewee*] did some things in that time that you won’t like. Maybe he stole from you. He can’t tell us that if you are here, because if something happens in the future, he knows he will be the first target.’¹⁷ Such interactions certainly corroborate the idea that ‘with anonymity comes comfort and with comfort comes candor’ (Jacobs, 2006: 164).

Nevertheless, while it is possible that the researcher’s status as an outsider can encourage more open narratives, they are still susceptible to some lies, inaccuracies, evasions and half-truths. The researcher must nonetheless develop strategies which can help them to identify, and consequently to critically reflect upon, deception, seduction (Robben 1995), distortion and deviation in narratives. Three different means of reflecting upon the veracity of the material evolved in the course of my fieldwork. The first involved comparing narrative accounts with official human rights documents and media reports. This not only enabled me to identify factual inaccuracies, such as the timing of the onset of violence in the area, but also to compare them with statements made at the time of the violence. In addition, interviewees themselves served to corroborate or refute each other’s narratives. A key advantage in gathering detailed interviews from large numbers of interviewees in a small area, is that it enables the researcher to cross-check accounts for inconsistencies. Moreover, the use of personal networks and snowballing recruitment strategies meant that many interviewees were familiar with each other and would refer to each other’s actions during the

¹⁷ This alludes to the prevalence of personal score-settling during the post-election violence, situating the practice within a culture of mob justice and violent reprisals. This is further explored in Chapters Four and Seven.

violence. As such, while one interviewee might be more evasive about their involvement in a particular incident, others might specifically identify him as being the leader. Perhaps the most productive strategy, however, involved engaging local assistants in conversation about events in the area, and discussing specific interviews with Nusrah. Indeed, it was very common following an interview for Nusrah to express his thoughts on the plausibility and veracity of the narrative. These dialogic reflections upon the material were of crucial importance in assessing the authenticity of the interviews.

In addition to reflecting upon issues of authenticity, there has been a wealth of literature which draws attention to the researcher as a ‘variable in the interview process’ (Edwards 1993: 185), suggesting that his or her particular characteristics will elicit particular narratives. Undoubtedly, my status as a young, white, female researcher had an effect on the interview process.¹⁸ However, in a post-conflict divided society such as Kenya, the identity of insider assistants can equally influence the narratives of interviewees. While it has already been stated that Nusrah’s Nubian identity was advantageous, the matter is a little more complex. In a society characterised by an embedded ethnic logic, where ethnic identification is a typical mode of thought, it would be naive to assume that interviewees were not engaging in what Burton (1978) has termed the process of ‘telling.’¹⁹ It became evident that Nusrah was often erroneously assumed to be a Luo; his friends frequently told me that he ‘simply looks like a Luo,’ and this situation was further complicated by the fact that he used a nickname in an effort to conceal his identity when meeting new people.²⁰ Occasionally, Nusrah was explicitly asked his ethnic identification, and in one particular interview he was asked to produce his identification card to ‘prove he was not a Luo.’ Such incidents raise

¹⁸ Though the nature of this effect is impossible to determine, and reflections upon it would be largely speculative.

¹⁹ Burton’s comment refers to the pattern of social cues and markers which are used to determine religion in interactions between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. There is a similar process at work in ethnic relations in Kenya. This is explored in detail in Chapter Three.

²⁰ Nusrah was particularly concerned with hiding his Muslim identity, for reasons which never became clear.

questions as to the number of interviewees who mistakenly assumed Nusrah to be a Luo, and the ways in which this might have affected their narratives. However while the impact cannot be fully appreciated, it is interesting to note that it does not seem to have prevented respondents from speaking negatively about the Luo community. While a full examination of the productive nature of the interviewee-assistant-researcher interaction remains outside the scope of this thesis, it is important to recognise that the material gathered is, to an extent, shaped by the interview process itself.

Thus, narrative interviews, and particularly those with a sensitive subject matter, are characterised by distortions, inaccuracies and even deliberate misdirection. I suggest that the partnership between local assistants and outside researchers can not only assist in the identification of distortions and exaggerations, but can also foster more authentic narratives. Indeed, as Jacobs (1998: 163) writes with reference to validity within criminological research:

A balance can be achieved with the right strategy and it is upon this balance that the validity of one's data may well hinge. In the mediated approach, balance hinges on help from an indigenous 'paraprofessional', a person entrenched in the criminal subculture who enjoys a solid reputation for street integrity and trustworthiness and can vouch for the researcher's legitimacy... The benefits of immersion coupled with the neutrality of distance make for a powerful combination.

The collaborative reflection upon interview material was of fundamental importance in relation to issues of credibility and veracity. However, it is of equal importance that the researcher continually reflects upon his or her own analysis. As Fujii (2009b: 161) suggests, the researcher's 'immersion into local cultures and perspectives... slowly shifts and transforms the researcher's own sense of what is normal and credible.' Therefore, attention must be paid to this. Such reflections are incorporated into my analysis throughout the thesis and the concluding section of this chapter draws attention to the importance of the researcher's emotions, reactions and changing perspectives in the field as data in themselves.

Researcher Subjectivity

The depiction of the outside researcher as an objective observer of social phenomenon has been both extensively and successfully challenged by the movement towards ‘embracing the subjective foundations of knowledge’ (Lerum 2001: 467), incorporating reflexive approaches towards fieldwork and acknowledging the researcher’s impact upon the data gathered. However, despite the attention afforded to the subjective position of the researcher and the cultural ‘baggage’ they bring to the field, there remains a tendency to avoid articulating feelings and writing emotions into analyses (Widdowfield 2000: 200). Yet, emotive responses and reactions to situations not only affect the strategies used to navigate the field, but they are also important elements of data in themselves. The researcher is not simply an observer existing outside of the research environment, but rather is ‘a participant who experiences the field while studying it’ (Toros 2008: 289). Indeed, despite the common idea that critical analysis is necessarily objective, emotions, both positive and negative, pervade fieldwork and ‘not accounting for all of one’s attitudes in and towards the field... is to some extent cheating both the audience and oneself’ (Lecocq 2002: 275). The characterisation of outside researchers as impartial and objective is misleading, particularly in the study of violence and conflict which can elicit strong feelings ‘likely to influence the researcher’s judgement and the type of information gathered’ (Smyth 2001: 8). This section offers a brief illustration of the value of incorporating feelings in and towards the field into our analyses and serves as a precursor to the colours of self-reflexivity which scatter this thesis.

Any fieldwork conducted in a potentially dangerous or violent setting is sure to engender some feelings of fear in the researcher. These feelings should be documented and

reflected upon for two reasons. First, they can have a significant effect upon the methodological and ethical choices the researcher makes in the field, and second, they are a distorted reflection of the culture of fear which pervades the research setting. Thus, as Kovats-Bernat (2002: 10) argues, ‘the researcher’s reactions to, fears of, and anxieties toward in-field violence have a place in ethnography.’ My fear of the potential repercussions of inadvertently giving the wrong impression about my research to the wrong person led me to be cautious, perhaps overly so, in my interactions with particular individuals and groups in certain field sites. Indeed, just as some interviewees had various misgivings about participating in the research for fear that I might be a spy, on occasion, I myself had reservations about interviewing them. I was concerned that asking the ‘wrong’ question to the ‘wrong’ person could have significant and, perhaps, violent consequences. In Eldoret, for example, fuelled by the prejudices of local contacts and interviewees, I was cautious in my interactions with members of the Kalenjin community. I had been warned that my research could engender hostility and violence amongst the Kalenjin if they believed me to be an ICC spy gathering information that could be damaging to William Ruto. As such, I was nervous conducting interviews in Kalenjin areas such as Maili Nne, and my feelings of insecurity walking around the village, as well as those of Nusrah, were a large part of the reason why we abandoned the site. An extract from a report I sent to my supervisors in February 2010 reads:

The main issue at the moment is difficulty accessing members of the Kalenjin community here. We have to be very careful here with this community because they are incredibly suspicious and fearful that we are working with Ocampo. As they were the main instigators in this area and their fellow tribesman, Ruto, is one of those most likely to be pursued by the ICC, we have to be careful.

Looking back on this report, the language itself reflects my alarmingly prejudiced, suspicious and homogenising views of the Kalenjin community, and the threat ‘they’ posed. Indeed, in light of this mindset, it is perhaps more understandable that I approached a potential field site,

Nandi Hills, with deep caution.²¹ My perception that the youth there were noticeably uneasy and suspicious of both my research and of me, engendered a fear that further attempts at carrying out the research in this town could provoke a hostile reaction and led me to decide not to persevere in the site. In a similar way, I approached interviewees who I knew to be members of organised gangs such as Mungiki and Siafu with more caution, altering and reframing particular questions, or even omitting them altogether. While I can only speculate as to the influence my anxiety had upon my interactions with such interviewees, I am certain that it was of significance. Thus, my fear affected not only the way in which the research was carried out, but also whether it was carried out at all in particular field sites (cf. Widdowfield 2000: 201).

In addition to the methodological implications, however, emotions such as fear and suspicion are indicative of the social and cultural context in which the research is taking place. As I became increasingly immersed in local culture my responses to violence and ethnic prejudice shifted substantially. By February, only four months into my fieldwork, my prejudices regarding the Kalenjin community were becoming entrenched,²² and are somewhat reflective of the divisive and ethnicised nature of Kenyan society and culture. Perhaps the clearest, and in retrospect, the most alarming example of my position as a ‘functioning agent in the local culture of violence’ (Kovats-Bernat 2002: 217), however, is evident in my increasing indifference to mob justice and everyday violence in the areas in which I worked.

²¹ Nusrah was reluctant to assist in pursuing the research in this area. I decided to visit the town alone to see if I could find a local youth who was willing to act as my assistant for the research, and travelled there with a fellow researcher who had some contacts in the area. However, I felt anxious when broaching the subject matter of my research with residents, and I perceived them to be uncomfortable with the topic and reluctant to get involved. In hindsight, this perception may well have been largely, if not entirely, distorted. I am also led to speculate whether approaching the field site with a Kenyan may have been more profitable, and helped to allay any concerns as to my intentions.

²² They would later become challenged by my friendship with a Kalenjin youth in Nakuru, and through my interviews with Kalenjin in this town. My perception that the Kalenjin in Nakuru were somehow less threatening than those who resided in ‘interior’ rural Kalenjin areas surrounding Eldoret and my different approaches to, and interactions with, members of this community reflects the shifting relationships between groups across space which has important implications for the local dynamics of violence. This is explored in Chapter Seven.

What follows is an extract from one of the few reports which explicitly focused on my personal reactions to an occurrence in the field. The following excerpt is taken from an email I sent to my supervisors following an incident that took place within the first month of my arrival in Kenya, when I was interviewing some youths in Gatuikera, Kibera.

I was told that a thief had been caught and burnt alive not twenty minutes ago just around the corner. They [*the boys I was interviewing*] insisted on taking me to the place to see the body. As we walked down the railway track I was getting increasingly anxious. I thought I was going to be sick. I saw ahead that there was a large group of people (men, women and children), all gathered in a semi-circle around the body of the man. His hands had been tied behind his back, petrol poured over his head and he had been burned alive as people stood around and watched. I have heard that some were also throwing stones at him as he burned. The most disturbing thing about the scene, however, was not the body itself, but the reaction of the people. It was nothing to them. People stood and looked, made jokes about it and then carried on with their lives. As we walked away, my guide asked me if I was alright. I told him that I couldn't believe that people were so blasé about the life of another human being. His only response was, 'This is the slum. We see it all the time. It's normal. Someone will be lying dead on your doorstep and you just step over him and close the door. It is nothing.' Later on I spoke to my guide again about it. I reminded him of his own words not two days earlier when he described such a death as 'dying in the line of duty' – by that he meant that people who have perhaps not eaten for three days, or at the end of the month when rent is due, can become desperate and do things they do not want to do. I said to him that if people in Kibera lived this way, they surely understood the situation that the boy must have been in to even contemplate stealing in Gatuikera,²³ how could they not show some mercy? He merely shrugged and said that that was the price of being caught. The next day I thought I would speak to some women about the incident to see what their reaction was. It was exactly the same. They laughed at my discomfort, made some jokes, and told me that it was normal here. The thing I can't stop thinking about is how frightened that man must have been as they were tying his hands, and throwing petrol over him. And I just can't understand how people can stand and watch it like it's entertainment. It made me feel sick and just very, very sad.

Four months later, however, I had a very different reaction to a similar incident. One day, as we were coming into our final weeks in Eldoret, Nusrah received a call at 3am. It was his neighbour, reporting that Nusrah's house had just been broken into and robbed by three men. The neighbour had chased the thieves; he had caught one and slashed him to death with a

²³ There is a local vigilante group called *Siafu* which operates in the area and is well-known for leading such punishment of thieves in the area. As such I was confused as to why someone would attempt to steal in their stronghold, rather than in another area of the slum.

machete, injured another, while the last escaped unscathed. My immediate reaction was to ask how much had been stolen. I was largely indifferent to the fact that a young boy had been killed, or indeed that I knew and liked the man who had killed him. However, when I related this story to a friend back in the UK, her shock that the thief had been killed, and by a friend of mine, and moreover the casual way in which I was telling her about it, forced me to reflect upon my indifference. I came to recognise it as important data in itself. As uncomfortable as it was to recognise in myself, it was indicative of the ease with which violence and mob justice can become normalised in a culture of violence. This issue is explored in further detail in Chapter Four, but the significant point here is that the researcher's emotive reaction (or in this case lack thereof) to the field should be recorded diligently.

Thus, I make every effort throughout this thesis to colour my analysis with such reflexivity, based upon the assumption that 'the best objective knowledge is rooted in subjective experiences, publicly acknowledged, and reflected upon by authors' (Lerum 2001: 480). The researcher is not simply a third-person narrator but also a first-person participant, and his or her reactions to the field should be part of the data set. I am in full agreement with Blee's (1998: 396) recommendation that 'maintaining an emotional log of one's feelings and the emotional negotiations of fieldwork relationships over time is one way to ensure that emotional issues will be available for subsequent analysis', and I see my failure to do this regularly and diligently as a substantial loss of a potentially informative dimension of the fieldwork.

Conclusion

Sensitive, micro-level research in post-conflict, divided societies poses unique and significant challenges to the researcher at all stages of the research process. The difficulties

encountered are not only methodological, but also ethical, and new researchers in particular can be left feeling isolated and uncertain of their footing in light of the scholarly silence which has surrounded these issues. We must be more transparent in our presentation of how we collect our data; the need for such disaggregated and locally-grounded empirical research in studies of conflict is great and, as such, better mechanisms and strategies for negotiating the difficult setting must be explored and developed. This chapter has drawn upon my own experiences and has suggested that the collaboration of outside researchers and inside assistants can be an effective, valuable, and rewarding means of negotiating the field. The crucial role of research assistants is often obscured in scholarly writing, yet, in reality, he or she is often the hero of the research (Jacobs 1998: 163). Nusrah, Charles, Abdul, and the numerous other local assistants and collaborators who assisted with my research, as well as many of the interviewees themselves, helped me in identifying field sites, facilitating access, ensuring safety and security and reflecting upon the authenticity of the material, and the thesis is as much the result of their hard work as it is mine. This strategy undoubtedly comes with its own challenges and problems which must be acknowledged. Their presence can generate ethical problems, and errors in the choice of assistant can be both devastating to the research, and potentially dangerous. Moreover, it is all too easy to accept and internalise their prejudices and biases towards particular field sites, people and settings, significantly affecting the contours of the research and the researcher's approach to the field. Nevertheless, I maintain that the 'hidden colonialism' (Sanjek 1993) of much fieldwork, which assumes the researcher's absolute control over the research environment, is not only misleading, but it does a serious injustice to the vital role played by local research assistants. Finally researchers should both record and incorporate their emotional reactions to the field within their analyses, not only because they are often important sources of data themselves and they point to potential skews and biases in the material, but also because they might assist and

reassure other researchers in their own field experiences. This chapter, at least in part, is a plea for greater transparency in our reflections upon the field, one which highlights the mistakes made and the opportunities missed. It is only through an honest engagement with our cumulative field experiences that better methodological and ethical guidelines can be established, and that further important and rigorous research can be carried out in difficult situations.

Chapter Three:

Everyday Ethnicity:

Social Space, Everyday Life and the Construction of Identity

Introduction

As has already been highlighted, the literature exploring ethnicity is replete with analyses which examine the macro-historical construction of ethnic boundaries over time, and analyses of ethnic violence have a tendency to emphasise the capacity of elite actors to manipulate and mould ethnicity to suit their own agendas. The former, while often appreciating the stickiness of ethnic identity, does not explore the ways in which ethnicity is produced, reinforced, negotiated and challenged from below in the here and now. The latter, with its focus on moments of political salience and elite rhetoric, often downplays the extent to which ethnicity permeates everyday life and shapes behaviour and interaction – Ajulu (2002: 252), for example, states that, ‘in “normal” conditions ethnic identity does not really play an important role in the interactions between different groups.’ Both bodies of literature assume that ethnicity resonates evenly and consistently on the ground. This chapter problematises some of these suppositions, arguing that ethnicity is neither an ‘intermittent mood’ (Billig 1995: 6), nor is it evenly produced, enacted and experienced at the local level. Rather, it is differentially embedded in daily practices, habits, routines, institutions, social structures, interactions, and modes of thought, and is significantly influenced by socio-spatial dynamics. This chapter, then, explores these dynamics and examines how ‘social, spatial and ontological processes interact’ (Sidaway and Smith 1989: 318) in Kenyan society.

A deep-rooted consciousness of ethnic identity and differentiation pervades contemporary Kenyan society, colouring everyday interactions and experiences. Ethnicity in Kenya is not simply one form of identification which sits latent and dormant in a toolbox of multiple, unstable identities, waiting to be brought to life by ambitious elites; it is not something to be ‘donned and shed according to a short-term and largely instrumentalist logic’ as is sometimes assumed in theories of ethnic violence (Nugent 2008: 922);¹ it is more than this, it is a pervasive and habitual way of thinking, of interpreting and of making sense of the world (Karner 2007: 4; cf. Billig 1995: 10). Recognising and examining these patterns of thought, and the ways in which they operate in everyday life is important, as they speak to how groups of people construct their reality and how they might interpret a series of events (Burton 1978: 7).² Indeed, if local level actors tend to categorise each other along ethnic lines, understanding a relatively stable boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and if they are inclined to understand events through an ethnic lens, then not only does this help to explain the resonance of elite appeals to ethnicity, but it allows for its capacity to operate independently of elite machination. This section seeks to demonstrate how this ethnic consciousness operates in everyday life in Kenya through a discussion of the process of ‘telling’ (Burton 1978: 4), an examination of the sensitivity to, and awareness of, ethnicity in day-to-day life, and an illustration of the pervasive tendency to interpret events in ethnic terms.³

¹ Nugent is actually referring to the profusion of this assumption within the inventionist literature of historical identity construction, but the eloquent phrasing is equally pertinent for a substantial element of contemporary ethnic violence theorising.

² Thus, ethnicity is not *only* a product of identity construction, but, once it is deeply embedded in social structures, everyday life and consciousness, it can become a constructor in itself, a framework through which people perceive and interpret their social reality.

³ This, of course, is not to suggest that there is no room for alternative readings of a situation, only that ethnically framed interpretations are extremely common, and tend to predominate. As is argued throughout the thesis, however, ethnicised perspectives can be reinforced, policed or disrupted by socio-spatial dynamics.

There are numerous accounts, across a wide range of disciplines, which recognise the anthropological tendency of people to use certain cues, signs and markers to place strangers into categories such as race, religion, class and ethnicity.⁴ In Kenya, it is the latter which dominates this process and the ‘first question after encountering anyone for the first time always seems to be “what is he?”’ (Harris 1986 [1972]: 148). One Kenyan writer, in an opinion piece for *The Sunday Standard*, laments the ‘fascination with our tribes’ and the extent to which ethnicity is ‘stamp[ed]... in our psyche’, stating:

Tribalism is entrenched in our very fibre. In fact, you have not introduced yourself *properly* until you have answered the question: “Where are you from?” This seemingly innocent question... is for the purposes of establishing your origin. (Baiya 2008).

Furthermore, the claim to be able to ‘tell’ the ethnicity of a stranger is not uncommon and while it is certainly not undisputed – indeed, I recall one youth exclaiming, ‘you cannot tell just by looking!’ in response to his friend’s insistence that he was particularly skilled at identifying the ethnic category of others – it is, nevertheless, widespread. Notions that an individual can ‘simply look like a Kikuyu’ were a common feature of many of my interviewees’ narratives. This process of ethnic categorisation, however, is evident not only in times of violent conflict, when it can mean the difference between life and death, but also in the more mundane sphere of everyday interaction. Ethnic differentiation is, in fact, a ‘typical mode of thought’ (Burton 1978: 37) in Kenyan society. While the reliability of the cues used in categorisation processes is certainly questionable and contested, the practice of ascribing ethnic identity upon others, and the use of such ascriptions to ‘think with and act upon’ (Burton 1978: 38) is a prominent feature of everyday life. Moreover, ‘the cognitive mechanisms of ethnic categorisation’ work to ‘give ethnicity a salience that typically remains unexamined in the literature’ (Levine 1999: 173).

⁴ See for example Suttles (1968: 15); Sebring (1969); Burton (1978); Harris (1986 [1972]: 148); Anderson (1990); Horowitz (2001:124ff); Brubaker et al., (2006: 217ff.).

The cues to ethnic categorisation in Kenya are many and varied and, moreover, are often disputed. While they appear to be relatively stable, they are subject to renegotiation and transformation over time and space, as particular behaviours, practices and attitudes associated with a community alter according to context. Thus, the physical, phonetic and behavioural markers of categorisation identified here are specific not only to the Kenyan context, but to the Kenyan context at a particular moment in time. I offer only a brief exposition of the cues upon which identification is based, as it is not the markers themselves which are of interest, but rather the process of differentiation and the implications it has for understanding the significance and salience of ethnic identity in Kenya.

A wide variety of different cues, which broadly fit into three main categories – physical markers, phonetic signals and behavioural mannerisms – were identified through interviews, conversations, and general observations, and it is the combination of these different indicators through which ethnic ascription is reached. Visual cues, for example, include dress,⁵ hairstyle, and culturally-specific bodily modifications such as circumcision, body piercings and tattoos. Physical stature, facial structure and skin tone are the most oft-cited ways in which people ascribe ethnic identity, and the stereotypes of the Kikuyu as light-skinned, and the Luo and Kalenjin as much darker, are pervasive. Additionally, phonetic markers are a prominent means of differentiation. The use of vernacular language is often a good indicator of ethnic category, but accent and conversational style are of equal significance; not only are Kiswahili and Sheng⁶ frequently spoken, but it is also not uncommon for individuals to learn other vernacular languages, particularly if they live in an area in which another community constitutes the majority. As one interviewee states:

⁵ While a distinctive dress can be directly associated with an ethnic group, such as the Maasai garments, religious robes are also occasionally considered to be indicative of ethnic identity. The white turbans worn by Akorino followers, for example, are regarded as a marker of Kikuyu identity. This relationship between religion and ethnicity in Kenya is discussed later in the chapter.

⁶ A slang language that has evolved amongst urban youth, the corpus of which is an amalgamation of English, Kiswahili and other vernacular elements.

The Kikuyu accent is very distinctive. Even the Kisii, it is almost a blend with Meru. Kambas are distinctive... they talk and you know this one is a Kamba. They know how a Luo speaks. So just by speaking you could tell the tribes. (SIL, Interview, Woodley, Nairobi, 22 November 2010).

Similarly, names are an important cue to ethnicity and the act of calling someone by their name, such as Mwangi, Otieno, Kipsang, and Mutunga serves to confirm their identity to others. As one interviewee states, ‘my name is purely Kikuyu, if you hear it you just know that I am a Kikuyu’ (BTS, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 14 April 2010). Finally, subtle behavioural characteristics, such as a person’s gestures, his way of looking, his way of talking and moving, his place of residence, his companions, the pubs and social spaces he frequents, what newspaper he reads, where he buys it from, which matatu⁷ he takes, what position he adopts on a particular political issue and other such subtle indicators, are important elements in the process of ethnic categorisation. Suttles (1968: 15) has identified similar identification processes in the Addams area of Chicago and concludes that ‘in combination these become the signs on which residents rely to define a person and to determine their course of action.’

While there is an acute awareness that markers are not fool-proof, misidentifications are rarely a source of friction in everyday life and, often, are met with light-hearted joking, ‘the humour lying as usual, precisely in the gaffe’ (Burton 1978: 64). As has already been noted in Chapter Two, Nusrah was often misidentified as a Luo, apparently by virtue of his dark skin tone. One interviewee, an elderly Kikuyu man from Kiambaa, convinced of Nusrah’s Luo affiliation, insisted upon seeing his identity card before proceeding with the interview. Once it had been established that Nusrah was indeed a Nubian, the two men laughed raucously at his similarity to ‘those stupid Luos.’⁸ This incident is illustrative of the

⁷ Small minibuses which are a popular mode of public transport in Kenya.

⁸ The use of the derogatory epithet ‘stupid’ when referring to the Luo community is extremely common. Similar ingrained elements of negative ethnicity are further explored in Chapter Four.

deeper role telling plays in everyday life: it governs people's actions and behaviours, it informs them of who someone is, what it is appropriate to say to them and in front of them, and how to behave towards them. This preoccupation with ethnicity is perhaps not surprising considering its socio-economic, political and cultural significance in society, and the intense concern with knowing the ethnic identity of others is largely a result of its importance in negotiating everyday life. Where access to jobs, loans, housing, school bursaries and other such resources are dependent upon ethnic identity, or at the very least perceived to be so,⁹ it is unsurprising that ethnic identification processes are of importance in everyday life. Moreover, people are acutely aware of the fact that this cognitive process of telling is a factor in daily interactions and that it must be navigated whenever possible. A particularly revealing example of this occurred during the early stages of my fieldwork as I was looking for accommodation close to Kibera. Nusrah had spent several weeks helping me find a suitable room and he usually insisted upon going to look at the place without me first, believing that landlords would raise the rent significantly if they realised that a *mzungu*¹⁰ was interested in renting the room. However, on one occasion, he received a phone-call from a friend of his, Ed, who knew of a house in Jamhuri. Ed told Nusrah to bring me to view the house, explaining that the landlady was a Meru and would not rent the room to him if she mistook him for a Luo.¹¹ Nusrah related the story to some of his friends during an informal group interview, saying:

⁹ This issue is discussed further in Chapters Four and Five, but it should be noted here that while I do not deny that ethnic nepotism and corruption are features of Kenyan society, the perception of their extent and influence is often overstated by local level actors. The exaggeration of this favouritism is, for example, highlighted by a Kikuyu resident of Kawangware who states, 'like for Equity Bank, there's a saying that if a Kikuyu goes there he gets free money, but we're using our ATM cards, it's not free money. It's a myth.' (BM, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 15 March 2010).

¹⁰ The Kiswahili word typically used to refer to a white person.

¹¹ The reluctance to rent properties to members of the Luo community has emerged largely in the wake of the 2007 elections, when many Luo tenants, particularly in the urban slums around Nairobi, refused to pay rent to their Kikuyu landlords. The stereotype that 'Luos want free things' and that 'Luos won't pay rent' has become pervasive and persists in contemporary Kenya.

If there is an empty room here, they'll have to ask... like when I looked for Sarah a house in Jamhuri. Ed said that the mother is a Meru and she doesn't want a Luo in this house, "You must come with the lady, because you look like a Luo." When we got there, the woman asked me, "Are you a Luo?" She asked what my name is, I told her¹² // she asked, 'Are you a Luo?' I tell her, "No, I'm a Nubian Muslim"... but if I said that "I'll be here and I am a Luo," do you think I can get the house? No. (MUS, Group Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 2 January 2010)

This account demonstrates both Ed's and Nusrah's awareness of the cognitive process of telling which would underscore initial interactions with the landlady, as well as their understanding of its potential consequences. Thus, people negotiate everyday interactions in the knowledge that this process is a constant factor, and it informs their behaviour and predicates action. Moreover, it is not unusual for individuals to make use of particular cues to misinform and misdirect in an attempt to hide their ethnic identity. This practice was prominent during the post-election violence as targeted individuals would dress like the members of other groups, speak in other languages, and adopt behaviours associated with the 'right' political party (and so the 'right' ethnic group)¹³ in an effort to escape from dangerous areas. However, miscuing is also practiced in times of relative peace and normality. Nicknames amongst urban youth, for example, particularly in ethnically mixed social groups, often serve to mask ethnicity. This use of cues to misdirect and misinform thus further highlights the collective awareness, salience and prevalence of this mode of thought in Kenyan society.

The second point of discussion in this section, closely related to this process of telling, is the acute attentiveness to, and awareness of, individuals' ethnic affiliation, both in the public arena of wider society, as well as within local neighbourhoods. The ethnic identities of politicians, chiefs, the local police OCS (Officer Commanding Station), sports stars and other

¹² Nusrah's name has been altered to protect his identity, but it must be noted here that his surname began with an O. There is a belief that only members of the Luo community have names which begin with an O, and it is this relation of his full name which prompted the landlady to repeat her question.

¹³ Such as wearing a campaign t-shirt or colour associated with the acceptable party in the area, or shouting "ODM" or "PNU" as appropriate. See Chapter Five for an exploration of the association between ethnic identity and political parties.

prominent social and political figures are well known. Moreover, certain businesses are recognised as belonging to particular communities, such as the Kikuyu-owned Equity Bank, Mololine matatus, and CitiHoppa buses. However, this ethnic awareness is even more prominent at the micro-level; residents know the ethnic identity of their neighbours, of the landlords and tenants of each house in the area, and the ethnic affiliation of local business owners and their employees. One interviewee, echoing the words of many others, states, ‘in my plot it was mixed, we are three Luo, and two Luhya, one Kamba, one Kalenjin and the rest are Kikuyu, so mostly they are Kikuyu in that plot’ (JG, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 3 June 2010). There is nothing necessarily conflictual about this identification,¹⁴ but it is illustrative of a pervasive, entrenched, and relatively stable ethnic consciousness, which not only facilitated the targeting of individuals, houses and businesses during the violence, but which perpetuates and renders more durable the relevance of ethnicity in everyday life.

The final point which is indicative of the predominance of ethnic consciousness in Kenyan society is the frequency with which events, both local and national, small scale and large, personal and collective, are interpreted in ethnic terms. Conflicts between individual politicians are often understood as evidence of an attempt by one community to target, dominate, or finish off ‘our’ group, rather than as personal wrangling between politicians and parties, or as disputes over policies and ideologies. Indeed, an article appearing in the *Daily Nation* following the suspension of the then-Minister of Agriculture, William Ruto, on suspicion of his involvement in a corruption scandal, draws attention to this ethnic framing of the political arena:

In Kenya, whenever the man in the dock is from your ethnic community, that community is “the target.” So any Kenyan could have predicted the hullabaloo that

¹⁴ Although at times the perceived dominance of businesses and economic activities by a particular group within an area is a significant source of resentment. This is explored further in Chapter Four.

followed President Kibaki's suspension of William Ruto from the Cabinet: "Our tribe is being finished" (Ochieng 2010).¹⁵

Such interpretations and framings of political events can have very real consequences at the grassroots. That morning of 14 February 2010, immediately following the announcement of Ruto's suspension, tensions were significantly heightened in Eldoret town and the surrounding areas. Members of the Kalenjin community began to congregate on Malaba Road in the centre of Eldoret, vehemently discussing and protesting their man's suspension, demonstrations reportedly took place in Nandi Hills, and several members of the Luo community were arriving in town claiming that the Kalenjin were chasing them away from their homes. The General Service Unit (GSU) was deployed to manage the situation, and tensions in the town only died down after Ruto was reinstated by President Kibaki later that day. Similarly, fierce debates over Bethuel Kiplagat's suitability for chairing the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) following the post-election violence,¹⁶ assumed a distinctly ethnic dimension:

Threats by the Kalenjin that they will not participate in the TJRC if Kiplagat was removed and claims that the chair is targeted because he is a Kalenjin threaten to completely derail the process (Kenya National Accord Monitoring Project, 2010).

Other large scale events, which are not necessarily or inherently of a political nature, provoke similarly ethnicised readings. For example, following the seizure of a cache of weapons in Narok in December 2009, ethnicised interpretations permeated public discourse again, as people voiced their suspicions that an ethnic community was arming itself. A middle-aged

¹⁵ It is interesting to note that the author of this article, Philip Ochieng, a Luo, presents President Kibaki as the 'protagonist' of the incident, when in reality it was the Luo Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, who called for the suspension. In fact, Kibaki reinstated Ruto later that same day on the basis that the Prime Minister did not have the authority to suspend ministers. Although Ochieng admits that Raila took the blame, he insists that Kibaki was behind it. This could be understood as an example of ethnicised perspectives and biases permeating editorial pieces, as the author appears to distort the facts of the situation in order to place 'his man' in a more favourable light.

¹⁶ There was mounting public pressure for Kiplagat to resign his chair of the TJRC due to the fact that he was in government during the time in which many of the atrocities being investigated occurred.

Kikuyu man from Bombolulu in Kibera, vocalises this predominant discourse in an interview, when he states,

Like in the newspaper, there are guns in the Maasai area, and no one knows why those people are having guns. The people who know are only the area MPs, maybe in the future, maybe they are going to start their army. (FR, Interview, Bombolulu, Kibera, 16 December 2009).

While I would certainly agree with Wa-Mungai (2007: 339) that events of a political nature ‘seem to be more open to ethnically coded readings’, this tendency is far from being the exclusive domain of the political sphere and, in fact, extends to local and personal situations. People often rationalise a job rejection or a failed loan application by virtue of being from the ‘wrong’ community; being refused credit at local shops and kiosks is similarly interpreted in these ethnic terms; landlords are often accused of charging higher rental rates for members of other communities and evictions resulting from a failure to pay the rent are not uncommonly interpreted as being ethnically-motivated, rather than understood as an issue of business and livelihood.

While the tendency to interpret events in ethnic terms is common, particularly in the political arena, socio-spatial dynamics play a significant role in either constructing, reinforcing or challenging this ethnic component of the habitus. Where social networks are largely intra-ethnic, for example, then these attitudes and perceptions are shaped and further affirmed through local public discourse and conversations with friends and neighbours. However, in ethnically mixed settings it tends to provoke heated debates, in which ethnicised perspectives are challenged, rather than being confirmed and reinforced.

Everyday Life and the Segregation of Space

This ethnic consciousness, and the predominance of ethnicity as the defining cleavage within Kenyan society, is shaped, maintained, and reinforced by and through its continual

reproduction in the everyday habitual practices of life; that is, ‘ethnic components of the habitus’ (Bourgois and Schonberg 2007: 28) are maintained through daily routines, practices and social structures. I hesitate to use the term ‘ethnic habitus’ as some scholars in other fields have suggested, given its implicit connotations that each respective ethnic group has distinctive cultural dispositions and habits. Rather, I employ Bourgois and Schonberg’s phrasing, indicating that there are ethnic dimensions within the habitus, which predispose people to understand the social world in ethnic terms, which help to generate and maintain ethnic differentiation as the defining cleavage of Kenyan society, and which influence the ways in which people act and react to emerging social circumstances. This section, drawing upon ‘the idea that practice underlies consciousness’ (Bentley 1987: 27-28), examines the ‘continual “flagging”’ (Billig 1995: 8) of ethnicity in day to day life in Kenya, through both its banal, and its more dramatic and performative expressions.

While macro-historical approaches to ethnic identity construction dominate the literature, there has been more recent interest in the role of the everyday, as scholars are beginning to emphasise the significance of the small, mundane and generally unnoticed ways in which identities are reproduced at the micro-level (for example, Billig 1995; Edensor 2006; Brubaker et al. 2006; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008a, 2008b). What has been far less explored, however, is the relationship of these everyday practices to social space. This is somewhat surprising given the fact that space can have a significant influence on shaping everyday life experiences, and it is through these lived experiences that the habitus can be reinforced or modified:

Being the product of history, it [habitus] is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:133)

It is this notion which underscores one of the key arguments of this chapter: that ethnic components of the habitus are either produced and reinforced by, or contested and challenged through, lived experiences, and these are, to a large extent, shaped by socio-spatial dynamics. Thus, I suggest that spaces which are dominated by one ethnic group, and which consequently encourage predominantly intra-ethnic interaction, embed ethnicity within the everyday lives of ordinary actors through the ethnicisation of social structures and institutions, the frequent flagging and performance of identity, and the inter-subjective negotiation, construction, and reinforcement of ethnicised narratives and perspectives. On the other hand, in ethnically mixed territories, the ethnic components of the habitus are challenged on a daily basis as ethnic cleavages are less entrenched in social and institutional structures, the everyday expressions and practices of ethnicity are significantly reduced, and inter-ethnic interaction consistently challenges ethnic narratives. Appadurai has drawn attention to this importance of space stating that ‘locality is always emergent from the practices of local subjects in specific neighbourhoods’ (Appadurai 1996: 198). Liisa Malkki (1995) has similarly observed how processes of identity construction can be influenced by local circumstances in her study of Burundian Hutu refugees in exile in Tanzania. She argues that while refugees living together in a camp were ‘continually engaged in an impassioned construction and reconstruction of their history as “a people”’, those who were more dispersed throughout the town, ‘had not constructed such a categorically distinct, collective identity’ (1995: 3). She concludes that this sense of collectivity and historicity are produced through everyday practices (1995: 241). It is this influence of socio-spatial dynamics in the production and maintenance of ethnic identity which is explored here.

However, an important qualification must be made at this point. Throughout the chapter I suggest that the segregation of ethnic groups in space influences the inculcation and reinforcement of ethnic components of the habitus. This argument is potentially vulnerable to

the criticism that it takes an overly ‘positional’ view of identity, suggesting that ‘social location *determines* subjective identity’ (Bottero 2010: 4). This is not the argument I wish to make. Rather, I suggest that it is through the ‘everyday experience and interactional enactment of ethnicity’ (Brubaker et al 2006: 168) that the ethnic components of the habitus are either reinforced or challenged. That is to say that ‘an individual agent’s experience of isolation from or exposure to actual everyday life spaces of other groups’ (Schnell and Yoav 2001: 623) is of fundamental importance. I certainly do not wish to overemphasise the power of physical space and structures in constraining the agency of individuals. Of course, people are not confined to the spaces in which they reside and many people actively cultivate social networks outside of their territories; spatial structures do not wholly constrain agency. Nevertheless, they do *encourage* social networks which are reflective of the ethnic makeup of the neighbourhood and it is far from unusual for individuals to spend the majority of their day within their own neighbourhood. Gotham and Brumley (2002: 269) draw out this idea of agency, suggesting that individuals *use space* by engaging in a range of activities, ‘to create, present and sustain a personal identity tied to place’ such as cultivating ‘spatially defined informal social networks.’ Thus, in areas dominated by one group, social contacts, while rarely exclusively intra-ethnic, are nevertheless dominated by members of the same community, whereas in ethnically mixed zones, social networks echo the mixed demographic.

This section is divided into three parts; the first offers a brief examination of the segregation of space, and how it influences social structures and the everyday interactional experience of ethnicity, the second explores the banal elements of ethnic identity, and the final section explores the more overt dramatic performances of ethnicity that reinforce ethnic consciousness.

Spatial segregation of communities and the ethnicisation of social structures

The concentration of ethnic communities within specific regions and provinces of the country is the product of a complex interaction of pre-colonial migration and settlement patterns and colonial policies of divide and rule, which not only solidified previously fluid social networks and constructed a more stable consciousness around ethnic boundaries, but also fostered and strengthened a strong sense of attachment to particular territories.¹⁷ This regional ethnic division of space is echoed at the micro-level, largely the result of ethnic enclave formation through urban migration patterns; the various slums and urban spaces across the country are microcosms of wider Kenyan society. Thus, it can be said that there has been a certain ‘ruralization’ of Kenyan cities which ‘gives the various neighbourhoods their ethnic coloration’ (Jua 2005: 105). The imaginative dimensions of these territorialised identities are central to understanding ethnic relations and politics in Kenya, and as such these are explored in detail later in the chapter. However, of concern here are the more objective, concrete and material effects of this segregation. While territorial boundaries are indistinct and largely imagined, the concentration of ethnic groups within geographical space, both at the macro- and at the micro-level, has very real consequences for the entrenchment of ethnic cleavages in social structures and the everyday experience and practice of ethnicity. The ‘ethnicisation’ of social structures, that is ‘the tendency for institutions, social groups and social divisions to take an ethnic form’ (Ngunyi 1995: 124) is, to a large extent, related to the spatial distribution of members of the same ethnic community. Schools, for example, both in rural areas, and (to a lesser extent) in urban settlements,¹⁸ tend to be dominated by one ethnic

¹⁷ A comprehensive account of the origins of this ethnic division of space remains outside the scope of this thesis. For various analyses see, for example, Soja (1968); Ominde (1968); Spear and Waller (1993); Ouchou (2002); Wanyonyi (2010).

¹⁸ I suggest that the ethnicisation of schools in urban areas is highly dependent upon the ethnic homogeneity of enclaves as well as their proximity to other villages. For example, the peri-urban centres of Huruma and Kiambaa in Eldoret, both predominantly Kikuyu communities, are relatively isolated from other villages and neighbourhoods. So, the tendency of children to attend schools within walking distance of their homes (Miguel

group¹⁹ and, as ‘prime sites of identity formation’ (Secor 2004: 360), they can help to foster the awareness of ethnicity and ethnic differentiation in early childhood years.

Similarly, ethnic cleavages are apparent in religious life, as particular churches and religious denominations have come to be associated with particular groups.²⁰ An Islamic preacher from Kibera who teaches comparative religion points out the ethnic segregation of Christian denominations within Kenya, stating that ‘7th Day Adventist people, most followers are Kisiis, Anglican - most are Kalenjin’ (PAD, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 15 December 2009), and Deacon (2011: 76) reports that the Kenya Assemblies of God churches are seen as being ‘Central Province Churches.’ This religious fractionalisation consequently encourages less heterogeneous congregations, which are then further reinforced by the spatially segregated dynamics of both the rural and the urban arenas. Thus, people in the churches within Kibera, for example, tend to ‘come from the same group as each other’ (Deacon 2011: 59) due to the segregation of Christian denominations and the concentration of certain groups in particular neighbourhoods.

These brief observations concerning the ethnicisation of educational and religious institutions are just two examples of the ways in which ethnicity has become embedded in social structures, partly as the result of the concentration of ethnic groups within particular spaces. Yet the pattern is further evident in other elements of social life, including sports

2001: 2) leads to a Kikuyu dominance of the student body in these areas. However, in more densely populated urban slums, such as Kibera and Kawangware, where ethnic neighbourhoods exist in close proximity, and where minority communities are still significant in numbers, schools are often much more ethnically mixed.

¹⁹ Indeed, ethnic divisions within the education system have been further entrenched by the implementation of certain policies ensuring its continuation. For example, in 1976 the Ministry of Education implemented a policy stating that in provincial and district primary schools the language of the school’s catchment area should be the language of instruction for the first three years, ensuring that the majority of students are from the local community. Additionally, the quota system initiated in 1985 dictates that 85% of provincial secondary school admissions places be reserved for students from within the province. The former policy is rendered possible due to the concentration of ethnic communities, whilst the latter serves to reinforce and indeed to perpetuate spatial segregation.

²⁰ The origins of this ethnicisation of religious denominations lie in the trajectory of colonial missionaries. For a good historical overview, see Ngunyi (1995).

teams,²¹ unions,²² businesses, friendship groups and gangs. Indeed, the ethnic cleavage is ‘manifested in virtually all politically and socially relevant organisations and group affiliations’ (Lijphart’s 1975 [1968]: 23) at the macro-level, and the pattern is further replicated at the micro-level as institutions and social structures are ethnicised to a greater or lesser extent according to the spatial demographics in which they are situated. Thus, as Suttles (1968: 41) has suggested with reference to the Addams area of Chicago, ethnic groups are not only separated by location:

They are divided still further by a host of ecological and institutional arrangements. Generally, the religious, commercial, recreational and educational institutions help sustain these ethnic boundaries.... the overall structure, then, is one in which local institutions either mirror the ethnic sections in the neighbourhood or bring out the opposition between them.

Banal ethnicity



Figure 1

²¹ The Luo-associated Gor Mahia football club, and the Luhya-based AFC Leopards are good examples. While the ethnicisation of the Kenyan football league has been somewhat diminished in recent years as corporate and institution-sponsored clubs have emerged and ‘shifted power away from community-based clubs’ there remains support for these ethnic teams, particularly among ‘Kenyans living in informal settlements such as Mathare and Kibera’ (AfriCOG, 2010).

²² Carotenuto suggests that the Luo Union, for example, was reborn as the Luo Council of Elders in the early 1990s and draws attention to the ‘rumours of the re-emergence of other ethnic-based associations, such as the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association in 2005’ (Carotenuto 2006: 67-68).

Figure 1 depicts a photograph of a small sign nailed to the wooden post of a street light, advertising house-girls of ‘all tribes.’ It was situated on Joseph Kangethe Road, on the outskirts of Kibera’s Toi Market. The advertisement is illustrative not only of the centrality of ethnicity in employment and business opportunities, but it also constitutes an example of ‘banal’ or everyday ethnicity, that is the mundane indicators of ethnic identity in daily life.²³ These banal routines and signs are ‘such a familiar part of the social environment, that they operate mindlessly, rather than mindfully’ (Billig 1995: 60). In Kenya, there are two important and related aspects of these everyday indicators of identity: the first are the mundane flags of ethnic identity itself, that is the reminders and practices of one’s individual ethnic association; the second are the indicators of ethnic difference and cleavage in broader Kenyan society. The sign in Figure 1 is an example of the latter, serving as a banal reminder of the significance of ethnic identity in employment opportunities, and flagging the ethnic cleavages which characterise Kenyan society. Similar reminders of ethnic divisions can be seen littered throughout the Kenyan press. Wa-Mungai (2007: 339), for example, draws attention to the dominance of the ‘ethnic question’ in public discourse by examining newspaper headlines in the early months of 2007. While he suggests that the obsession with ethnicity may be more prominent than usual, situated as it is in the lead-up to the elections (2007: 338), my own research supports his conclusions that news reports, editorials, opinion pieces and readers’ letters consistently make reference to ethnicity, tribalism and ethnic cleavages outside of election years. This section focuses largely on the visual and audible reminders of ethnic identity in day to day life, but it is important to note that this signalling is not limited to ethnic identification alone, but extends to reinforcing the logic and consciousness of ethnic differentiation and cleavage which pervades society.

²³ The former term was coined with reference to nationalism by Michael Billig in his 1995 book *Banal Nationalism*

Some of the visual reminders of ethnicity have been discussed earlier in this chapter in relation to the process of telling. Brubaker et al. (2006: 217) suggest that the cues by which people arrive at ethnic ascription can also be understood as ‘embodied ethnicity’, thus highlighting their function as banal markers of ethnic identity. These cues can be further visualised through specific actions, such as wearing a nametag in the workplace, but should also be understood as examples of banal ethnicity in and of themselves. The visibility of cultural dress and adornments, the use of cultural objects such as mats, serving dishes and gourds, and the display of traditional weapons such as bows and arrows in the home, while largely unnoticed due to their familiarity, are important symbols of ethnic identity.²⁴ Similarly, notice-boards advertising vernacular church services, matatu signs displaying ethnicised destination names (such as Kisumu Ndogo, or Kiamba),²⁵ and *hotelis* promoting the sale of ethnic dishes, are frequently seen, but seldom noticed, flags of ethnic identity.

Audible markers of identity in everyday life similarly underscore this ethnic consciousness. Hearing matatu touts shouting their routes, for example, is the audible equivalent of the signs which display their destination. Music which is played in homes, heard in the streets, or danced to in clubs, frequently reveals ethnic dimensions, either through its use of vernacular language or by relating ethnic folk tales and stories. This does not mean to say that members of different communities do not listen to and enjoy the music of other ethnic groups, but rather I suggest that the awareness of its origins does serve to reinforce ethnic consciousness in an imperceptible way. An extended extract from an article

²⁴ Interestingly, such objects are usually intended for use on special occasions such as at weddings or annual rituals, but they often remain on display or are used for other things in everyday life. For example, in the Nubian homes in which I stayed in Eldoret and Nakuru, the *kuta*, a traditional woven plate and cover used to present gifts to the bride at a wedding, or to serve food at other special occasions, were used to store everyday items such as pins and combs, or to cover food in the kitchen to protect it from insects. Thus, ethnically-symbolic objects such as these are also used in banal and mundane ways in everyday life and constitute an unconscious flagging of ethnic identity.

²⁵ These are names associated with the ancestral homelands of the Luo and the Kikuyu respectively.

appearing in *The Standard* newspaper demonstrates how ethnic consciousness colours everyday life, and it also offers a clear illustration of the process of telling in operation:

Anyhow, here we were, tribesmen of the land, enjoying ourselves, getting nicely deaf and drinking our livers away, when the DJ suddenly brought the house down. First, he played that age-old Kikuyu gem *Wendo Wakwa Mwariro* [...] His choice was greeted with whoops of delight, with every able bodied man and woman rushing to their feet in a whirl. I looked around with my practiced village eye and I can affirm with certainty the ancestry of the people gyrating on that dance floor was not confined to the mountain region. I recall the unforgettable picture of a six-foot-tall man whose dark features clearly suggested his umbilical cord is buried on the shores of Lake Victoria. He dances with the distinctive pleasure and style of the men of the lake: eyes closed, arms raised in reverence and hips swaying seductively like the famed romantics these brothers are. And the maiden, to whom the swaying hips were intended, had “Mt Kenya” written loudly all over her. But before you could say *Wachiliia*, the cheeky DJ hit the brakes on his turntable and threw a hot Kamba number called *Osa Ovoo Lucy* into the works. There were again whoops of delight with dancers gyrating even faster to the trademark *tingili*-style Akamba guitar. And then before the ready excitement generated by that Kamba gala had died down, the sneaky DJ played the *Ohangla* anthem by that man called Nyaduno [...] I espied the aforementioned Luo romantic sweep his Mt Kenya maiden into his arms, sway her gently to the tune of his land, eyes shut with the sheer pleasure of it all (Malanda 2007).

The article illustrates the fact that music can strongly evoke ethnic associations, subtly flagging ethnic identity; at the same time the extract clearly demonstrates the practice of telling, and the pervasiveness of ethnic stereotypes which underscore Kenyan society. There is nothing inherently conflictual in the banal flagging of identity, but it is a constant and consistent aspect of Kenyan society. Indeed, a song entitled *Barack Obama ni Jaluo* [Barack Obama is a Luo] performed by Bafu Chafu at the Sawa Sawa concert in Nairobi in May 2010, was greeted with some amusement by the crowd, who swayed along to the reggae beat and who joined in on the repetitive chorus. In many ways, then, it can be argued that ‘ethnicity is fun in everyday transactions of a non-conflictual kind. It adds spice to life. Ethnicity is the way people do things: it is culture’ (Frederiksen 1995: 54). Nevertheless, this is not to say that banal ethnicity is *necessarily* benign (Billig 1995: 7), indeed, there are

particular circumstances in which it can be a significant source of tension and conflict. This is explored in Chapter Four.

So far, this section has argued that banal expressions of ethnic identity and differentiation are present in wider society as a whole. However, in some ways this mundane flagging of ethnic identity is shaped by socio-spatial dynamics. The practices of ethnic identity are understandably more frequent and pervasive in areas that are dominated by members of the same ethnic community, and less apparent in ethnically mixed territories. The remainder of this section focuses on the use of vernacular language, as arguably the most pervasive and common audible reminder of ethnicity in everyday life in Kenya, demonstrating how this everyday practice of ethnic identity and marker of difference can be influenced by the socio-spatial circumstances of daily life.

While English and Kiswahili are the two national languages of Kenya, the use of vernacular dialects remains prominent. The spatial distribution of ethnic groups, both at the macro- and at the micro-level, reflects a marked difference in the choice of language used in various day-to-day interactions. Indeed, there is a degree of urban-rural divide in the language of the everyday; in rural areas, vernacular languages tend to be utilised to a greater extent than either English or Kiswahili, both in conversations between family, friends and neighbours, as well as in interactions with strangers. The extensiveness of vernacular language use in these areas is apparent in the fact that a significant number of residents, particularly of the older generation, display limited knowledge of either Kiswahili or English. Ogechi (2003: 279) goes as far as to suggest that:

Kiswahili itself is as alien to most rural people as is English, and, even among those who claim to speak it, only a small proportion are fluent enough to engage in serious discussions. The rest of the Kenyan languages are largely used for intra-ethnic communication in homes and rural areas.

Thus, language choice in rural areas frequently tends towards the vernacular in the home in public settings and in interactions with strangers. Indeed, ethnic minorities residing in these areas often learn the language of the native community in order to negotiate everyday life. As such, the use of vernacular language not only exists as a daily, generally unnoticed, reminder of ethnic identity, but similarly, can accentuate the sense of ‘otherness’ amongst minorities as they are conversing in another community’s language.

The situation in the urban arena is, however, far more complicated. In some territories the language choice echoes that of rural areas, but there is often a more complex, largely unconscious process of language selection at work. Again, the socio-spatial dimension is of fundamental importance. In ethnically mixed territories, the use of vernacular language is very rare and it is not unusual for children who have grown up in these areas to have no knowledge of their mother-tongue. While some families use vernacular languages within the home, interactions with friends, neighbours and strangers uniformly adopt Kiswahili or Sheng; indeed, the use of vernacular language in mixed interactions is rare and is almost certainly considered rude. However, this does not completely preclude the use of vernacular languages; there are occasions in which ‘private talk in public places’ (Brubaker et al. 2006: 246), that is conversations between friends or family members in public settings, are conducted in the mother-tongue. This is frequently heard in exchanges between matatu drivers and their touts, for example, who routinely converse in their mother-tongue, as well as in certain pubs and streets, and in some places of work. This use of vernacular language is rarely ‘policed’ and while it is certainly a source of friction in specific settings,²⁶ on the whole it is passed by without comment.

²⁶ In fact, I witnessed one occasion in which the use of vernacular language did evoke a strong reaction, and led to one of the few incidents of policing I witnessed during my fieldwork. I was sitting in a small office in Nyayo House, Nairobi, trying (largely in vain) to sort out a waylaid visa application. There were two male employees, myself, and a Kenyan woman in the office. As they sifted through piles of paper, searching for my application, the two men were talking to each other in Kikuyu. After a few minutes of pointed glares, the woman interjected,

The social rules and expectations governing language choice in ethnic enclaves is more complex. So far it has been suggested that the language of communication in social settings tends to reflect the ethnic makeup of the area; in ethnic enclaves, however, there is an intricate mix of language use and frequent code-switching. There is some evidence to suggest that the use of vernacular languages is common within urban ethnic enclaves. In 4B, Mathare, for example, two of my interviewees were proficient in neither Kiswahili nor English, preferring to conduct the interview in Jalu; similarly, in Kosovo, one interviewee unconsciously slipped back into Kikuyu in the middle of his narrative, suggesting that it is a more common vehicle of expression in his everyday life. Nevertheless, while friendship groups in these areas tend to be dominated by one community, they frequently include a few members of other groups and, consequently, Sheng is the more prominent language of interaction amongst the youth.²⁷ Sheng is sometimes pointed to as an illustration of generational identities emerging, cutting across ethnic divisions and uniting the youth. However, it should be noted that it can still include elements of vernacular languages which serve as banal flags of ethnic identity:

There are local variations of the language which betray the presence of ethnically predominant groups in the respective localities. The Sheng of the predominantly Kikuyu Bahati, therefore would be expected to have a higher proportion of Kikuyu linguistic items than say the Sheng spoken in Majengo, though both are situated in Nairobi Eastlands' (Mazrui 1995: 169).

Even through the use of Sheng, then, ethnic flagging is still in operation. The frequency with which vernacular languages are heard, and moreover practiced, as individuals negotiate their

berating them for using their vernacular language in a government building and asserting that they should only use the official languages of Kenya. This disapproval of the use of vernacular languages by government employees is echoed by a number of interviewees, and, I suggest, should be understood in relation to grievances over unequal access to the resources of the state, such as employment opportunities. Horizontal inequalities such as these, be they perceived or real (or a bit of both), are explored in Chapter Four.

²⁷ The fact that a significant number of minorities living within these enclaves report that they have some knowledge of the language of the dominant community suggests that it is frequently heard, and often used, in day to day life.

daily lives, is an important element of maintaining the salience of ethnic consciousness and differentiation.

The final aspect of banal ethnicity which deserves some attention here is the presence of ethnicity in everyday interactions and discourses. While Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008a: 540) suggest that talking about the nation is infrequent and momentary, in Kenya ethnicity is actually quite regularly referred to in everyday conversations. While it certainly is not a feature of every interaction, ‘there is a vibrant surface level articulating and even celebrating ethnicity through greetings, jokes, in negotiations and in conflicts.’ (Frederiksen 1995: 54). The predominance of ethnic stereotypes is extensive and they frequently form the basis for jokes and commentaries on individuals, groups, and society as a whole. Wa-Mungai explores the variety of ways in which ethnic stereotypes pervade discourses by offering detailed anecdotes which illustrate their extensive use. He suggests that ‘the predominance of these stereotypes within everyday social discourse seems to make ethnic othering normative’ (Wa-Mungai 2007: 339). My own observations confirm this suggestion, and one particular occasion is especially illustrative of the pervasiveness of ethnicity in social discourse, even outside the realm of political debates and discussions. In July 2010, the African Athletics Championships were held at Nyayo stadium in Nairobi and I attended two days of events with some Kiberan friends. Upon arrival at the stadium we climbed to the top level, and seated ourselves just underneath the large video screen in what my friends called the ‘Kibera zone.’ Often international sporting events such as these are pointed to by scholars and policy makers alike as vehicles for uniting divided nations.²⁸ Indeed, from a distance, it certainly would seem that Kenyan nationalism had superseded ethnic identity and difference. The crowd enthusiastically chanted “Kenya, one, two, three!” as the Kenyan triumvirate of

²⁸ One example of such a position in relation to Kenya is put forward by Njoki Ndung’u (2009), an advocate of the High Court in, an opinion piece entitled ‘Sport and art can heal rift that damages our nation’, that appeared in *The Saturday Standard* in 2009.

Rudisha, Yego and Kivuva dominated the 800 metre race, and people vocally expressed their national pride, boisterously singing the national anthem and cheering each time the Kenyan flag was raised in victory. However, the conversations heard from within the midst of the crowd during the events themselves reveal the continued presence of ethnicity in everyday discourses, even in what might appear to be an overt performance of national identity. Ethnic stereotypes frequently formed the basis of jokes and commentaries on the athletes' performances. Watching the javelin competition, I heard one youth remark that the Kalenjin should be good at that event, 'since they are good at throwing arrows.' His friend then retorted 'leave away those Kalenjin; *kwani*, are there no Luo shot-putters? They are the good stone-throwers of Kenya.' Moreover, while national victories were celebrated, defeats were often commented upon with reference to ethnicity. Of particular note was the surprise defeat of Janeth Jepkosgei in the women's 800 metres at the hands of Algeria's Bourkas Zahra; as she fell behind, my friend turned to me and said, '*ati* Sarah, do you see this stupid Kalenjin?' and another joked that she would be running faster if she was chasing a Kikuyu 'like they did in post-election!' None of these comments appeared to cause offence, and indeed were met with good humour and shared laughter. This is not to say that ethnic jokes and stereotypes never cause discomfort or conflict, but in such a setting they at least appear to be taken in good spirit. However, as Frederiksen (2010: 1076) states, 'ethnicity is central in joking relationships, but can turn sour, as in the use of jocular stereotypes in the build-up to the 2007 elections.' The potentially sinister undertones of these jokes and prejudices are further explored in Chapter Four.

A further important element of the conversational and discursive dimensions of ethnicity is the fact that they can be affirmed or policed in some spaces, whilst challenged and deconstructed in others. Ethnicised perspectives, behaviours and attitudes can be

constructed and reinforced, governed and disciplined through moral and political judgements.

Indeed, as Frederiksen (2010: 1074) suggests:

Ethnicity thrives... in Kenya's oral and everyday culture and discourse. Ethnic identification keeps together a "moral community" which often, and especially in times of crisis, provides support and functions as the sounding board for communal values and experience.

Thus, predominantly intra-ethnic interactions provide this 'sounding board', which not only reinforces, but also to an extent, produces, ethnicised perspectives, shapes perceptions of ethnic others, and influences behaviours. In ethnicised spaces, then, people engage in the construction of ethnic narratives and attitudes, that is, they imagine, negotiate and shape the content of ethnic identity. In ethnically mixed areas and social interactions, however, ethnicised perceptions are challenged, modified, and occasionally deconstructed, through conversation with ethnic others, helping to give form to 'a challenging cosmopolitanism' (Malkki 1995: 232). Indeed, not only is there less opportunity to inter-subjectively produce and police these attitudes and behaviours, but identities are not so intricately connected to space. The influence of interactions and conversations in the construction and reinforcement of ethnicised attitudes and behaviours are particularly notable during the 2007 campaigns and during the violence itself, and, as such, are further discussed in Chapters Four and Six.

Thus, the simultaneously visual, audible and conversational practices of banal ethnicity maintain the ethnic components of the habitus, producing, reproducing and sustaining a salient ethnic consciousness in Kenyan society.

Demonstrative Ethnicity



Figure 2

In addition to these banal indicators of ethnic identity, there are more overt, ritual and dramatic practices of ethnicity which occur less regularly, but which equally underscore the ethnic components of the habitus. Life-cycle events, including coming-of-age rituals, weddings, and funerals, in addition to traditional festivals and other cultural celebrations are important aspects of the reinforcement of ethnic identity. Certainly these are less frequent and more momentary than the banal expressions discussed above, but their practice remains an important element in the continued production and maintenance of ethnic consciousness. It is not that these rituals are necessarily performative in the sense that, in themselves, they serve to construct identities, but they are performative in the sense that they are visible demonstrations and practices of ethnic identity, which are not so banal and mundane as to go unnoticed, but not so dramatic as to be extraordinary. Again these are, to an extent, shaped by the socio-spatial environment, occurring more frequently and more visibly in ethnically homogeneous areas than in mixed territories.

The traditions that surround marriage ceremonies and the practices which are performed and observed by members of the family and the local community in the

preparations for, and celebrations of, the wedding, offer a good example of this more overt and dramatic demonstration of ethnic identity. The customs surrounding the marriage such as the slaughter of a goat, the presentation of a dowry, the preparations of the bride, the ceremony itself, and the celebrations afterwards, where cultural dress is often worn, traditional food prepared, and ethnic songs are played and danced to, are highly visible, conscious enactments of ethnic identity. Figure 2, for example, is a photograph taken on the ceremonial day of a Nubian wedding which took place in Karanja, Kibera. The groom, having completed the marriage ceremony in the mosque, is being escorted through the streets of Kibera by his family, to his wife's home. The procession is accompanied by enthusiastic singing of traditional Nubian songs. Later that day, the celebrations continued in an open space near Karanja road, with Nubian music and dancing. Thus, not only is the celebration an overt and elaborate performance of ethnicity, as large numbers of family and community members adopt traditional dress, assume certain traditional roles, and perform cultural practices, reinforcing their own sense of identity and unity, but it is also conducted in a public space and in a manner which renders this ritual highly visible to members of other ethnic communities living in the area. Thus, the performance highlights differences in cultural practices and renders ethnic differentiation highly visible.

The relatively new phenomenon of cultural nights, in which members of ethnic communities gather in a particular place, eat traditional food, and celebrate their culture through the performance of traditional songs and dances, offer further opportunities for the overt, conscious expression of ethnic identity. The intention behind the creation of these nights is to enable migrant workers to have a 'taste of the life they yearn for', and the originator of the idea noted that 'above all it creates a sense of belonging' (Obara 2003, cited in Mutonya 2007: 170). At the same time, however, they serve to maintain an awareness of

ethnic differentiation within society. One interviewee, a young man from Kangemi in Nairobi, highlights this dual impact:

Yes, tribes have meetings. Then there are things like Luhya Night, Luo Night to remind them of the culture // we've gone back to our roots and there are these cultural nights... Stories from our people and they tell you ancestral things... people are into tribes now

//

So when did these cultural nights and things start to re-emerge?

Let's say about three to four years ago they started coming out with cultural things, keeping our heritage. At one point it is good, but it reminds people of who I am and who you're not. Then I'll be better than you because you are not of my tribe. It brings divisions (SIL, Interview, Woodley, Nairobi, 22 November 2009).

Interestingly, these overt performances of ethnicity are often shared by residents hailing from other communities who want to experience other traditions and customs. Cultural nights are not attended exclusively by members of one community, nor indeed are weddings. In fact, at both the Kikuyu and the Nubian weddings I attended in Kibera during the course of my fieldwork, passers-by from other ethnic communities not only stopped and observed the traditions, but also, on occasion, joined in with some of the celebrations and the dancing. Furthermore, people of different ethnic groups contribute to the often overt and visible fundraising efforts for funerals of their friends and neighbours. Ethnic difference is not always conflictual; nevertheless, it is a defining feature of society which is continuously flagged through the observance of different practices and traditions. Moreover, the frequency and visibility of this flagging is, to an extent, influenced by the concentration of ethnic communities within particular territories.

Ethnicised Space

The geographical and spatial concentration of ethnic communities should not be understood simply as 'a residential agglomeration of social groups in neutral and static space' (Schnell and Yoav 2001: 622); rather, in Kenya, spaces have come to be imagined as

‘belonging’ to, and indeed ‘owned’ by, particular groups. Consequently, spaces can not only play an important role in producing and framing social identities (Schnell and Yoav 2001: 622), but the subjective and cultural meanings attached to them can help govern and shape behaviour within them.²⁹ This concluding section explores the ‘imagined geographies’ which characterise Kenyan society, arguing that space is ‘poetically endowed’ (Said 2003 [1978]: 54, 55) with discourses of belonging and ownership, and suggesting that the subjective meanings attached to it and the everyday practices which underscore the narrative, can help to produce and maintain a stable sense of ethnic differentiation.

Myths of origin and claims of belonging to a particular ancestral homeland are a common feature of ethnic categorisation, often identified as one of the fundamental attributes of the ethnic group, particularly in the African context. Cobbah (1988: 73) goes as far as to suggest that ‘geo-ethnicity’ is a more appropriate term for the phenomenon, concluding that ‘in Africa, ethnic identity is above all things a territorial identity.’ As has already been suggested, pre-colonial migrations and settlement patterns, in combination with the creation of rigid administrative boundaries, the regulation and monitoring of Native Reserves, and the reliance on provincial administrators in the colonial period, constructed a sense of ‘ethnic territoriality’ (Lynch 2011: 17) which still persists in contemporary Kenyan society, where provinces and regions are recognised as being the domain of particular groups. The Kikuyu, for example, are understood as belonging to, and indeed owning, Central Province, the Luo, Nyanza, the Luhya, Western, the Kalenjin, Rift Valley, the Mijikenda, Coastal province, and so on. This powerful attachment of communities with their ancestral homelands has facilitated the emergence of a native-immigrant dichotomy, where those residing outside of

²⁹ This is, of course, not to suggest that space and structure *determines* behaviour. Individuals can and do ‘contest and transcend situational frames of meaning and resist oppressive structures and subordination’ (Gotham and Brumley 2002: 282), and as shall be argued here, the geo-spatial imaginaries attached to territories are often challenged, contested, and occasionally modified.

their ancestral homes and in the homelands of other ethnic groups, are regarded as ‘foreigners’ and ‘immigrants.’ Visible practices such as regular returns to the rural home for festivals and celebrations, the custom of burial in the homeland and the production of ‘homes away from homes’ through ethnic enclave formation and labelling³⁰ reinforce this conceptualisation, as many migrants maintain strong ties with their rural homes.³¹ Yet, the narrative is so deeply entrenched that even families who have lived in an area for generations, who display no apparent ties with their ancestral land, and whose younger members have perhaps never even set foot in the homeland, are still subject to this immigrant status. As one interviewee, in his reflections on Kikuyu migrants, revealingly exclaims, ‘How can you say Rift Valley is your home? Your home is Central’ (B, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 19 March 2010). These claims to autochthony – meaning ‘sons of the soil’ – have been identified across the African continent and there is a burgeoning body of literature which is exploring its apparent resurgence in the context of democratisation (see for example, Geschiere and Gugler 1998; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2002; Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005; Geschiere and Jackson 2006; Jackson 2006; Socpa 2006; Marshall-Fratani 2006; Konings 2008; Bøås 2009; Dunn 2009; Geschiere 2009; Médard 2009). However, these analyses tend to focus on the regional level, and less attention has been paid to the ways in which these narratives are reproduced in the urban arena.³² As urban neighbourhoods come to be dominated by a particular community, discourses of territorial ownership emerge and an ‘intra-urban orientalism’ (Jua 2005: 116) becomes apparent, designating in the minds of residents the boundaries between ‘our’ space and ‘theirs.’ The borders are subjectively and

³⁰ Just as enclaves the world over acquire names which evoke the home of the dominant community, such as Chinatown, Little Italy, and Little Korea, ethnic enclaves in Kenya often invoke similar attachments to the ancestral home. For example, in the slums of Korogocho, and Kibera in Nairobi, and Langas in Eldoret, there are villages by the name ‘Kisumu Ndogo’, meaning ‘little Kisumu’, linking these Luo-dominated enclaves with the Luo homeland of Nyanza, of which Kisumu is the capital.

³¹ See Jenkins (2012: 3-8) for a fuller discussion of these practices.

³² Notable exceptions include Anthony (2002) and Fourchard (2009).

inter-subjectively constructed by local residents. While in some spaces a sharp and distinct borderline is understood – often marked by some geographical feature such as the dirt road which runs through the centre of Pondamali separating the Luo-dominated Ronda, from the Kikuyu area of Mwariki, the river which constitutes the border between the Kalenjin ‘hillside’ and the Kikuyu village of Huruma in Eldoret, or the football field marking the boundary between Kosovo and 4B in Mathare – in other instances, there is a more gradual transition through ethnically mixed frontier zones³³ and territories. There is a clear boundary consciousness amongst residents of urban settlements, and people are acutely aware of which neighbourhood belongs to which community. Thus, the ‘absolutist conception’ of ethnic others as ‘immigrants’ (Marshall-Fratani 2006: 17), both at the macro- and at the micro-levels, is a further means by which ethnic boundaries are continually reproduced and stabilised in contemporary society. Rogers (1998: 210) has stated that, ‘if racial meanings are thought of as contested and relatively unfixed, then spatial demarcation is a powerful strategy of naturalising and fixing such difference’, and while I do not believe that identity boundaries are forever-fixed, impervious to transformation over extended periods of time, autochthonous discourses certainly embed them further into consciousness and render them remarkably durable.

However, if the immigrant metaphor is remarkably durable and persistent, the subjective meanings attached to space are not. That is to say that the ethnicisation of space, the understandings of to whom that space belongs, is highly susceptible to contestation, renegotiation and transformation. John Lonsdale (2008) has identified this potential for change, highlighting the three idioms of *understanding*, *controlling* and *working* land when conceptualizing how claims to land entitlement and land are expressed in Kenya. To this I

³³ Frontier zones are more mixed than ethnicised spaces, but a particular community still constitutes the majority.

would add dominance, and, in Kenya – a setting where few communities can claim true autochthon status, and where most are migrants who have displaced others (Lonsdale 2008: 306) – this might be the most difficult claim to contest (Jenkins 2012: 18). The formation of ethnic enclaves, for example, can challenge native claims to the land, and can be seen as a ‘symbolic appropriation of territory and space’ (Achieng 2003: 165), and related shifts in numerical superiority in urban areas can similarly alter perceptions of who owns the territory. Two clear examples of this potential for change in contemporary Kenya are Nakuru and Kibera. Situated in the Rift Valley, and widely understood to be part of the Kalenjin homeland, Nakuru’s demographics have altered significantly over time and now ‘according to the Kikuyu, Nakuru should be a Kikuyu county like Nyeri or Kiambu because the Kikuyu are the most populous in the area and have the numbers to win most parliamentary seats and also control both the county assembly and government’ (*Daily Nation*, 8 September 2010). Similarly, the numerical dominance of the Luo in Kibera has led to a common understanding that ‘Kibera is for the Jaluos’ (CHOC, Interview, Waithaka, Kawangware, 8 March 2010), despite the historical claims to the land made by the Nubian community. Indeed, as Anderson and O’Dowd (1999: 595) state, border change can refer to ‘changing the symbolic meanings and/or the material functions of existing borders’, and in Kenya the two, that is the material and the symbolic, appear to be inextricably linked.³⁴ However, whilst claims of ownership and belonging may morph over time, this only alters the positions of the players, not the

³⁴ The relationship between numerical superiority and claims to belonging and ownership is closely related to ethnic politics and political dominance. This issue is expanded upon in later chapters but it should be highlighted here that the perception that economic opportunities are inextricably linked to having a member of the ethnic group in power is of fundamental importance to the discourses of ownership and notions of belonging in a particular territory. Thus, in Nakuru, as the Kikuyu become increasingly dominant, it is understood that they will come to hold the majority of political seats in the town. As a result, it is perceived that members of the Kikuyu community will occupy more jobs, own more businesses, command greater access to school bursaries and loans, and consequently, the town will be ‘theirs.’ The reality of this economic advantage to power at the grassroots is highly questionable, as can be seen in the case of the Luo community in Kibera, who have not significantly benefited from Raila Odinga’s position as MP. Nevertheless, the ‘significance of borders derives from the importance of territoriality as an organizing principle of political and social life’ (Anderson and O’Dowd 1999:594) and in Kenya, social, political and economic dominance are perceived to be inextricably linked.

game itself and the native-immigrant dichotomy remains intact (Jenkins 2012: 19). Thus, ethnic boundaries are relatively stable; it is the subjective meanings attached to them which are continuously being renegotiated and reformulated.

Conclusion

A comprehensive understanding of contemporary episodes of ethnic violence necessitates more than a macro-historical examination of the construction of ethnic cleavages, or an assertion that political elites invoke ethnic identities to further their own agendas. They also require an exploration of how these identities are maintained, reproduced, experienced, enacted and made meaningful in everyday life by local level actors. This chapter has argued that there is a pervasive ethnic consciousness in Kenyan society which is characterised by the cognitive process of telling, and the tendency to perceive of everyday events and interactions in ethnic terms. The ethnic components of the habitus are produced and maintained through daily routines, social structures, institutions and interactions, and these are, to an extent shaped by socio-spatial dynamics. Thus, in territories dominated by one ethnic community I argue that social structures and institutions have become ethnicised, encouraging predominantly intra-ethnic interaction. Consequently, the practices of ethnic identity are more prevalent, the subtle signs and indicators which flag it more pervasive and ethnicity is more deeply entrenched in the habitus. It assumes harder structures through its embeddedness in social institutions and is more durable in the imaginations of local level actors. However, in ethnically mixed spaces, the ethnic components of the habitus are frequently challenged through everyday conversation and discourse, the performance and interactional enactment of ethnicity is less frequent, ethnicity is not so deeply rooted in social structures, and the space is not understood as belonging to any one community. This does not mean that ethnicity

disappears in these areas, but that it is less entrenched and frequently challenged. The variation in the embeddedness of ethnicity in the everyday lives of ordinary actors has a significant influence upon their behaviours in and responses to the 2007-2008 post-election crisis.

Chapter Four:

Negative Ethnicity, Everyday Conflict and the Normalisation of Violence

Introduction

Kenya is experiencing a period of calm, but it is not peace.

(AB, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 20 December 2009)

In the previous chapter I explored the ways in which ethnic consciousness is embedded in the structures of society, suggesting that an appreciation of its everyday processes and workings is crucial to developing an understanding of its role in, and the dynamics of, violent ethnic conflict. This chapter continues with this line of argumentation suggesting that violence itself cannot be understood in isolation from the social context within which it emerges. While Kenya was once considered to be an oasis of peace in a region of instability, in reality, ‘ordinary citizens were constantly plagued by violence in their daily lives’ (Mueller 2008: 194). It is in this context of ‘diffused violence’ (Mueller 2008: 194), in this continuity between the ‘everyday’ and the ‘exceptional’, that the reaction to the flawed elections of 2007 must be located. The significance of this ‘ubiquity of violence’ has not only been recognised in the Kenyan context (Mueller 2008, 2010; Cheeseman 2008; Branch and Cheeseman 2009; Kagwanja 2009; Kagwanja and Southall 2009; Ndung’u 2010),¹ but it has also provoked a burgeoning literature, particularly amongst scholars of Latin America and post-apartheid South Africa (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Simpson, Mokwena and Segal 1992; Hamber 1998, 1999; Koonings and Kruijt 1999; Pécaut 1999; Moser and

¹ While I have cited those identifying the profusion of extra-state violence specifically in relation to the post-election crisis here, as Murunga (2011: 10-11) notes, studies of vigilantism and petty crime in Kenya more generally, also fit into this school. See for example, Anderson (2002), Katumanga (2005) and Kagwanja (2001, 2003, 2006). Moreover, Ruteere and Pommerolle’s (2003) study of community policing in Kenya further draws attention to the ubiquity of violence and the decentralisation of repression in the country, illustrating as it does, the brutal tactics employed by community policing institutions.

McIlwaine 2004; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004; Steenkamp 2005). This chapter contributes to this body of literature by exploring the everyday conflicts, ‘small wars’, ‘peace-time crimes’ and ‘routinized violence’ that colour Kenyan society, and builds upon it by situating ethnicity within them.

The chapter begins by suggesting that while there is nothing *inherently* conflictual about ethnicity, underlying inter-ethnic tensions and prejudices nevertheless scatter everyday relations in Kenya, and the resentments and grievances so brutally articulated during intense episodes of violence find more banal, but certainly not benign, avenues of expression in everyday life. It goes on to examine the structural violence that overarches Kenyan society, arguing that while inequalities and relative deprivations define almost all major social cleavages, it is the horizontal inequalities and ethnicised grievances that are the most significant source of resentment. The third section of the chapter explores the centrality of territorialised identity narratives to this culture of violence, arguing that ethnic tensions are maintained and exacerbated by autochthonous discourses of belonging and exclusion. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the manifestations of direct violence in everyday life, pointing to the parallels between these practices and those which marked the post-election crisis. Thus, running through the chapter is the suggestion that violent ethnic clashes should be understood as part of a continuum of conflict² (Richards 2005: 5) in which the ‘seeds of war are to be seen shooting up in peace’ (Richards 2005: 14).

² This notion of a continuum of conflict or violence has been effectively utilised in a number of different fields, most notably in studies of violence against women. Gardner (1995: 4), for example, in a study of gender and public harassment, states that ‘public harassment is on a continuum of possible events, beginning when customary civility among strangers is abrogated and ending with the transition to violent crime: assault, rape or murder. Women... can currently experience shouted insults, determined trailing, and pinches and grabs by strange men and be fairly certain that no one – not the perpetrator and probably no official – will think anything of note has happened.’ I adapt this notion of a continuum of violent behaviour to ethnic conflict throughout this thesis, suggesting that negative ethnic jokes, stereotypes, and insults constitute largely unnoticed, but still significant, forms of ethnic conflict, which are not wholly detached from, or unrelated to, situations of more intense ethnic violence.

Negative Ethnicity and Speaking Prejudice

In the previous chapter I suggested that ethnic identification and differentiation, while pervasive, need not necessarily be conflictual, and indeed is seldom overtly so. By this I mean that everyday interactions are predominantly friendly and cooperative, and that direct and highly visible friction is infrequent. However, at the same time, small and often barely noticed expressions of negative ethnicity, prejudice and resentment permeate everyday life. Recognising how these banal forms of ethnic conflict operate at the micro-level can help to elucidate the social logic of violence. Ethnically-based negative stereotyping, jokes, insults, verbal abuse, prejudiced statements and derogatory comments are forms of ethnic conflict, and their widespread acceptance and circulation facilitates their mobilisation and escalation into more direct forms of violence, including interpersonal brawling and fighting, neighbourhood clashes, and large-scale violence.

The role of negative ethnic rhetoric, both in the media – particularly vernacular radio – and in political speeches has been well-documented in the Kenyan context (KNCHR 2006, 2007; CIPEV 2008: 295-303; Ismail and Deane 2008; Rambaud 2009; Somerville 2011), as well as in other cases of ethnic violence and genocide.³ While this macro-level employment of negative ethnicity plays an important role in the increasing polarisation of societies at particular moments in time, the significance of prejudice in everyday interactions between local level actors is seldom sufficiently appreciated. Ethnic prejudices are not solely the construction of manipulative elites and media rhetoric, a tool employed for political agendas; they are also produced and reproduced by ordinary people in their day to day lives. Indeed, it is the very persistence and circulation of these prejudices at the micro-level that facilitates the

³ The most extensive literature on the topic has emerged out of studies of the Rwandan genocide. See for example, Steeves (1998); Des Forges (1999); Schabas (2000); and Thompson (2007).

successful reception of negative ethnic rhetoric from above. The ways in which negative ethnicity is articulated are wide-ranging, and while in some instances prejudice is overt, direct and openly abusive, in others it is much more subtly and humorously employed. While this near ethnic-racism which marks Kenyan society rarely produces open violence and, in many ways, is either accepted as a normal part of day to day life or simply laughed off, it nevertheless helps to embed ethnicised notions of superiority, inferiority and difference, and it continually produces and maintains underlying ethnic tensions.

The acceptability of ethnic prejudice in contemporary Kenyan society is striking, and there is a distinct ‘social silence’ (Harris 2003) concerning the use of negative stereotypes and ethnically-derogatory language.⁴ Sentiments depicting the Kikuyu as thieves and conmen, the Luo as stupid and arrogant, and the Kalenjin as secretive and backwards, are commonly heard during in-group communication,⁵ and these expressions of prejudice are seldom policed. A clear example of this social silence can be seen in the way a group of youths reacted to the inflammatory comments made about the Kikuyu community by one of my Luo interviewees in Mathare.⁶

We call them Kiuks, we call them monkeys, they are just like monkeys, you can give them a banana, and say you have three bananas in your hand, you give them one and then he’ll want more (MUS, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 29 April 2010).

⁴ It should be emphasised that not all stereotypes are negative. The Kikuyu, for example, are also said to be ‘hardworking’ and the Luo ‘well-educated.’ Nevertheless, the frequent and largely unchallenged use of negative stereotypes is notable, and the circumstances in which they are articulated are the main focus of interest in this chapter.

⁵ While ‘in-group’ is often employed to describe ethnically homogenous settings, I mean something different here. ‘In-group’ in my understanding need not necessarily mean wholly intra-ethnic, but rather refers to settings in which all ethnic groups represented are perceived to be friends and allies. Who constitutes the ‘in-group’, then, is both temporally and spatially contingent, and is open to negotiation and contestation. See Chapter Seven for a further discussion of the negotiability of boundaries of belonging in the context of the post-election violence.

⁶ This interview was conducted in the presence of other members of MUS’s predominantly Luo social group. While the majority of interviews were conducted in private, a small number were carried out in a more public setting such as this. These were, in fact, often extremely informative, and the research might have benefited from more group interviews of this kind.

This comment provoked some mild laughter and general nods of agreement from his predominantly Luo friends, but there was little evidence of shock and no attempt at dispute or challenge. Similarly, a Kikuyu interviewee showed no discomfort openly stating his feelings to me and to Nusrah that ‘those Luos, their origins are from Sudan and Sudanese people are illiterate and stupid, so they have that origin of stupidity. So because they are from that, they’re stupid’ (DH, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 22 April 2010). This stereotype of Luo stupidity is often employed through offhand epithets such as *jalujo jinga* [stupid Luo], and similar terms are regularly heard in everyday conversations about different ethnic communities. This ethnic prejudice is a product of socialisation,⁷ and the act of vocalising it, of ‘speaking prejudice’, not only normalises the practice, but further entrenches the sentiments within mentalities and consciousness. Indeed, the ease with which prejudice can become internalised, normalised and consequently reproduced, is evident from my own experience. Returning home from Kawangware one rainy day in March, I had a somewhat heated exchange with a matatu conductor over the price of the journey. When I related the story to some friends in Kibera, I angrily explained that the *makanga*⁸ had tried to convince me that the fare for the short ride back to Jamhuri – usually somewhere between ten or twenty shillings⁹ – was, in fact, two hundred bob! I concluded the story by indignantly exclaiming that he was a ‘typical bloody Kikuyu, trying to con me out of money!’ While I myself was shocked by my use of such ethnically-biased language, my audience – none of whom, it should be noted, were Kikuyu – simply nodded knowingly. The act of speaking prejudice has become common and routine in Kenya, and ‘if you go to the villages you find

⁷ Consequently they can vary significantly across time and space. Stereotypes and prejudices are not only related to macro-level contexts, but are also reflective of localised power relations. For example, in Kibera, a number of my interviewees suggested that the Luo community are arrogant and display superior attitudes towards other communities in the area, whilst the Kikuyu are ‘humble.’ This issue of locally contextual resentments is discussed in the next section.

⁸ The conductor.

⁹ Matatu fares often fluctuate depending upon time of day and weather conditions.

them grouping themselves, like a Kikuyu grouping, a Luo grouping, talking in their language, talking about the other tribes' (GLIV, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 21 March 2010). Consequently, ethnic prejudices are often reproduced with little conscious reflection.¹⁰ An article appearing in *The Sunday Standard*, offers a rare recognition of the entrenchment of ethnic prejudice in everyday Kenyan discourse:

We have also left unchallenged our ethnic stereotypes to the point of allowing hate speech to thrive in our conversations. We have accused our political leaders (and rightly so) of making hate speeches in public gatherings, but we are all engaging daily in the same sin. We easily make very mean comments that can perfectly fit into hate speech (Mwazemba 2008).

Directly insulting statements and the overt use of negative stereotypes and derogatory labels, however, do tend to be limited largely to in-group communication; they are much less frequently heard in mixed settings where members of the abused group are present. It is difficult to imagine, for example, that I would have made the same comment about the *makanga* had a Kikuyu friend been present. Wa-Mungai's (2007) analysis of the use of ethnic stereotypes in Kenya further demonstrates this key point. He draws attention to the use of Luo stereotypes in two different conversational settings, the first a group of four Kisii discussing a music competition in a bar, the second a political discussion between three Luos and a Kamba man. In the former, overtly derogative labels are used and negative comments are made; one member of the group exclaims, 'Given that the teachers in Tusker Project Fame Academy were *Jang'os*¹¹ what did you expect?!' (Wa-Mungai 2007: 341).¹² In the

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that it is not uncommon for people to ridicule stereotypes of their own community, particularly in interactions between friends. For example, one interviewee began his interview by asserting 'I'm a Kikuyu so I am one of those who they said stole the votes' prompting shared laughter between himself and his Kalenjin friend who was sitting next to him (MK, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 3 June 2010). Such humorous enactments of prejudice may well be intended to undermine or ridicule the stereotype and Leveen (1996: 36) suggests that they are successful in doing so. However, I argue that these moments of ethnicised self- and collective-deprecation simultaneously reproduce and maintain the negative discourse and the more serious issues which underscore it.

¹¹ *Jang'o* is an insulting and contemptuous street reference to the Luo (Wa-Mungai 2007: 341).

¹² The discussion prior to this comment alluded to the perceived bias of the judging in this singing competition, and Wa-Mungai (2007: 341) concludes that the group present a distorted version of reality, enabling them to employ a 'predetermined moral economy that pits "scheming" Luo against "unprincipled" Gikuyu.'

latter setting, on the other hand, Wa-Mungai argues that ‘the Kamba knows that he is outnumbered’ and, consequently, must articulate his disagreement with his Luo friends more objectively. Nevertheless, he succeeds in insulting them in a ‘veiled manner’ by alluding to their supposed infatuation with Western lifestyles (2007: 343-344).¹³ Thus, overt prejudices and negative stereotypes are frequently heard in everyday in-group communication, but they are much more subtly or jokingly articulated when members of the out-group are present. A particularly revealing comment recently appeared in a short opinion piece in the Kenyan paper *The Star*. The author states that the resentment of Kikuyu hegemony is ‘a subject that is talked about in murmurs in public and loudly in our bedrooms and sitting room’ (Mabinda 2012), alluding to the unacceptability of voicing such remarks too openly where they might be heard by members of the Kikuyu community. Indeed, in ethnically mixed settings, if someone is perceived to have overstepped the boundaries of acceptability through overly subjective, biased and prejudiced statements, s/he is usually challenged. For example, during one interview a Kamba interviewee pointed at Nusrah and exclaimed, ‘But you, you have tribalism. Yes you do. I’m married to a Nubian and the Nubian women come and make me feel bad. They say, “Why can’t you marry someone of your own tribe, why do you have to take a Nubian man?” You have tribalism.’ Nusrah smiled and without taking his eyes from the woman, gently joked to me, ‘You see now she is abusing my tribe!’ pointedly indicating to the speaker that she should redirect her line of conversation. Notably, there was a moment of awkward silence and the interviewee did not respond until Nusrah prompted, ‘So talk about something else’ (B, Makina, Kibera, 22 November 2009). Similarly, during a group discussion between two Luo and two Luhya youths, the following exchange took place:

¹³ The subtle way in which the Kamba man insults the Luo community – some of whose members are present – stands in stark contrast to the very explicit way in which he demeans the absent Kikuyu community: ‘What do they [*Kikuyu*] know other than buying land and cultivating coffee? They don’t even know Kiswahili but the Luo know English!’ This juxtaposition of the subtle and the overt draws attention to the ways in which the expression of prejudice is tempered in mixed settings.

M (Luhya): You know Raila is a bad influence for the Kenyan people. He is the one doing the tribal wars. I mean he came in here and said that people should decrease the rent. Raila is not a role model to people. Let it be like that.

T (Luo): Raila is a good person. He is fighting for the poor people.

M: Ok, but what has he done for the poor people?

[The conversation descends into lots of shouting in Swahili; it seems the Luhyas are on one side while the Luos are on the other about whether Raila has been a good leader or not]

M: We are not about tribalism and Kibaki, he only helps the Kikuyu people. But Raila, what people do with the name of Raila... they use his name badly.

(GWH, Group Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 20 November 2009)

M's open criticism of Raila is challenged by one of the Luo, and after some discussion and argument, he modifies his position slightly, shifting the responsibility for ethnic violence from Raila as the instigator, to ordinary people committing violence in his name. Another example can be seen in an interaction between a Luhya youth and a Kikuyu youth:

S: *Was there any hatred between communities before?*

JF (Luhya): There was no hatred. Everything was ok there was a good relationship between Kikuyu and Luo.

W (Kikuyu): There was a hatred.

JF: Before?

W: Between landlords and tenants.

JF: Oh yeah.

W: They wanted to stay here for free... and the Luhyas.

JF: *[Laughing]* He's saying that because I'm a Luhya.

W: That grudge started with Moi saying that this is government land and when he left the Luhyas and the Luos were celebrating because they were not supposed to pay. So that grudge was there for a long time. Raila to be President... we have plots, we have land, everything of ours. Us we knew what will happen, we didn't know what these people were planning.

JF: There was smoke everywhere.

S: *Do you agree with what he has said?*

JF: I agree with some of it. But it was mostly between Kikuyu and Luo.

(JF, Interview, Bombolulu, Kibera, 16 November 2009)

Despite JF's gentle and light-hearted signalling, W does not recognise or heed the reminder of social boundaries, and continues to talk negatively of the Luhya group. Consequently, JF tries to steer the conversation elsewhere through an abrupt change of subject. However, asked directly whether he agrees with W, he asserts that the problem was less with his own community than it was with the Luo. It is interesting to note in this interaction that there is a

potential for the conversation to become more confrontational, and deflection is the desired strategy of negotiation. Nevertheless, on occasion, attitudes or behaviours which are perceived to be ethnically biased and which are overtly articulated in inter-ethnic settings can cause significant tensions and can easily escalate. For example, in November 2009 *The Standard* reported the following incident:

Our readers have also frequently pointed out that tribal alliances in student leadership and welfare associations are a danger to national harmony. That is why reports last week that Nakuru Teachers Training College was closed after a face-off between students from two ethnic groups were alarming. The students were watching 7pm news when one group cheered the eviction of settlers from Mau Forest, annoying the 'rival' tribe (*The Standard*, 24 November 2009).

Thus, it can be said that in ethnicised spaces negative ethnicity, in its overt form, is discursively enacted more frequently, and the production and circulation of prejudice is more acute than in mixed neighbourhoods. When it is articulated in the latter context it is usually in the more subtle form of humour, and when an individual is perceived to have overstepped the boundary of acceptability, s/he is either gently reminded of social decorum, or challenged more directly; either way, the tension is usually, though not always, deflected and diffused.

However, the use of humour in ethnically mixed settings acts as a thin veil, (barely) covering underlying resentments and prejudices. Richard Jenkins (1994: 211) draws attention to anthropological studies that argue that where 'social restraints inhibit the overt expression of inter-ethnic hostility' ethnic joking becomes a vehicle of articulation. In Kenya, then, it is perhaps unsurprising that ethnicised jokes are common in inter-ethnic conversational settings. While it is acceptable, for example, to articulate resentments of ethnicised power and dominance during in-group settings, in mixed company similar grievances and resentments are more often articulated in the form of humour.

There is a joke around here that when a cop, like here, when you get arrested, the cop will say “*unatoka wapi?*”¹⁴ [*using an accent*], he will use that Kalenjin accent, because the police here are associated with the Kalenjin (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010).

The potent issue of inequality and ethnic favouritism underscores this joke, just as it does the more direct statements of resentment – such as ‘those Kikuyu own everything’ and ‘who do those Kikuyu think they are?’ (PAD, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 15 December 2009) – frequently heard in in-group settings. However, the more subtle verbalisation of frustration over perceived injustice and discrimination is a far more acceptable vehicle of expression in inter-ethnic settings. Thus, jokes can be used to articulate underlying grievances, as well as feelings of tension and fear. A further example of this can be seen in the following account of an interaction between Kikuyu matatu drivers, and their predominantly Luhya passengers in the immediate aftermath of the post-election violence:

At the bus stage in Kakamega, even the conductor and the driver were chatting and joking with the passengers saying, “You’re beating us, but we run the buses so if you beat us // you’ll endanger yourselves because you won’t travel. You’ll have to buy a bus, so watch over the donkeys and sell them after some years so that you can buy a bus.” So they were joking and the passengers were joking back (CB, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 3 April 2010).

While CB describes this as a relatively light-hearted exchange, it is in fact replete with articulations of inter-ethnic frictions and sentiments of superiority and inferiority. The Kikuyu matatu drivers are expressing their fear that they could be attacked by their passengers, and in the guise of a joke, demonstrate an awareness of their vulnerability. However, they are also aware of their power in the situation, drawing attention to the fact that they control the transport sector. Interestingly, the Kikuyu drivers throw an insult into the exchange in the form of humour, playing upon the stereotype that the Luhya are a poorer, less developed, ‘backward’ community; they will have to continue rearing their donkeys until

¹⁴ This phrase can mean ‘where are you coming from (right now)?’ as well as ‘where are you from?’ more generally.

they can sell them for enough money to buy a bus – notably a bus that the Kikuyu already have. So, while the exchange is not overtly conflictual, notions of unequal relationships and difference are maintained and reproduced, and ethnic tensions expressed, through it.

What might begin as a joke, however, can easily escalate and transform into something much more sinister. As one interviewee states, ‘sometimes you must be on your toes, jokes are jokes but you don’t know what will happen next. Sometimes they’re serious’ (K, Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 5 December 2009). This potential for escalation is particularly apparent in times of political tension, and one interviewee recalls that during the campaigns jokes often evolved and assumed a far more confrontational undertone: ‘We argued a lot, and he said things like “You’re thieves,” it was as jokes, but sometimes it heated up’ (MK, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 3 June 2010). There is a fine line between a joke and an insult, and given the right conditions, such interactions can degenerate into argument and violence.¹⁵

There is no such thing as *just* a joke and ethnic jokes are no exception... humour, insult and violence shade into each other and are intimately connected... Issues of power and control are at the heart of the matter (Jenkins 1994: 211).

The act of ‘speaking prejudice’, whether it be in the form of jokes or in a more overt manner, constructs and maintains negative stereotypes, produces and reproduces sentiments of grievance and discrimination, and facilitates their transition to more threatening acts at particular moments in time. Moreover, at times of political tension the boundaries of acceptability gradually shift; overt insults and direct mocking of cultural attributes become increasingly apparent in everyday inter-ethnic interactions, and jokes assume more sinister undertones. This is illustrated by the dynamics of the circulation of hate speech during the

¹⁵ Indeed, as Leveen (1996: 35) states, ‘the same ethnic joke told different ways – by different tellers, in different circumstances and to different listeners – may become increasingly or decreasingly volatile.’ For example, on a number of occasions people introduced me to their Kikuyu friends as ‘one of the ones who stole our votes.’ This joke told by a friend, in a period of relative calm is usually taken in good spirit and provokes mild laughter, not overt tension. However, a similar joke made by Nusrah to a Kikuyu interviewee in Kibera immediately provoked discomfort, tension and mistrust.

2007 campaigns; this movement along the continuum of ethnic conflict is further explored in Chapter Six.¹⁶

Thus, in periods of relative calm, negative ethnicity is evident in the open articulations of prejudice in in-group settings. In mixed settings, while the expression of prejudice and resentment is more subtle, it does not pass by wholly unnoticed. Just as Harris (2003) suggests, these experiences and practices of negative ethnicity are ‘the “smaller”, everyday actions of prejudice that fly beneath the radar’, yet their presence helps to maintain oppositional identities. It is part of a continuum of ethnically conflictual behaviours which facilitate the gradual transition into more direct forms of inter-ethnic violence. As the political situation became increasingly tense in the lead-up to the 2007 elections, ethnic jokes became more abusive and insulting, derogatory labels and inflammatory comments were used more often in direct inter-ethnic interactions, and ethnic disagreements regularly descended into interpersonal fights or brawls.

Structural Violence and Horizontal Inequalities

Many, if not most, of the ethnically-based jokes, prejudices and resentments which pervade everyday discourse in Kenyan society relate in some way to perceptions of dominance and subordination, superiority and inferiority, favouritism and discrimination – in essence they relate to perceptions of inequality. Kenya is a society marked by deep inequalities, both vertical and horizontal, and the majority of its citizens are, to some degree,

¹⁶However, even in these more tense circumstances, many interviewees did not believe that the jokes and threats articulated during the 2007 campaigns were serious, further illustrating their prevalence in everyday life. For example, one interviewee recalls:

D: Before the elections during the campaigns, people were threatening people, saying this tribe, this time we will not rule the country // Threats were there. We were taking them as jokes, not seriously //

S: *Why didn't you take the threats seriously?*

D: They were from the neighbours so we took them as jokes. We thought they will shout for two days or three days and that would be it.

(D, Interview, Soweto, Kibera, 21 November 2009)

subject to what Galtung (1969) has referred to as ‘structural violence’, where unequal life chances are built into societal structures, where there are deep inequalities in the distribution of power, and where human needs – including those relating to survival, well-being, identity, and freedom (Galtung 1990) – are lower than potentially possible. Galtung’s extension of the concept of violence to include any and all harm which occurs indirectly, has become widely accepted in academic and policy circles, and scholars from a variety of disciplines and in a variety of contexts have explored the roots, characteristics, and effects of structural violence. Some go as far as to suggest that the conditions and effects of structural violence are the ‘*primary* causes of large-scale violence’ (Nathan 2000: 189, original emphasis). While there are notable differences in understandings of the origins and development of these violent structures across cases, and their relationship to acute violence is debated, their manifestations are consistent. Poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunity, lack of access to education, healthcare and other social services, poor and dangerous living conditions, high infant mortality rates, corruption and deprivation are the hallmarks of structural violence. This section presents the manifestations of this form of violence in Kenyan society; while many of Kenya’s social and political divides are accentuated by deep inequalities, and while there is often an acute awareness of these, the ethno-regional dimensions are most frequently emphasised by my interviewees and provoke particularly intense reactions. While these violent structures do not cause conflict in and of themselves, they nevertheless maintain powerful feelings of frustration which are easily directed against specific communities, they contribute to the normalisation of direct violence, and they act as a significant incentive to participate in episodes of more widespread and intense violence. I begin by illustrating the structural violence and vertical inequalities which many of my interviewees experience in their daily lives, before exploring perceptions of ethnic inequalities. The section concludes by highlighting how the macro-narrative of ethnic dominance and subordination is not only

temporally contingent, but also can be inflected with experiences produced in local circumstances and contexts.

The majority of the research for this project was carried out with slum residents, those living in the informal settlements or peri-urban centres surrounding the larger towns of Nairobi, Nakuru and Eldoret. Residents of these areas are among the most excluded in Kenyan society and they are subjected to various layers of structural violence, facing severe livelihood insecurity, poverty and lack of opportunity.¹⁷ According to a recent World Bank report, 63 percent of slum residents in Kenya fall below the poverty line, unemployment levels are high at 26 percent, only a minority have secondary level education (24 percent), and only 3 percent of households live in housing with a permanent wall and access to piped water and electricity (World Bank 2008: xix). Consequently, many residents of these areas struggle to meet the costs of everyday life; they are vulnerable to disease due to poor living conditions, malnutrition, and lack of access to healthcare; high unemployment levels and school drop-out rates disable them from achieving their potential; they experience difficulties gathering funds for life-cycle rituals and cultural celebrations,¹⁸ consequently constraining their identity needs; and they face entrenched corruption within institutions, limiting their freedoms and potential opportunities.¹⁹ In these areas then, ‘violence enacted is but a small part of violence lived’ (Nordstrom and Martin 1992: 8), and there is a pervasive sentiment that, ‘We are surviving. We are not living, we are surviving’ (WJ, Group Interview with ROCP youth group, Makina, Kibera, 17 November 2009). Such structural violence creates a

¹⁷ It should, however, be noted that there is a great deal of diversity within these urban communities. While there is a large and highly visible contingent of unemployed youth, for example, there are also many residents who are much more economically stable. Similarly, while school drop-out rates are high, many disaffected youth have completed their secondary education and are actively seeking the funds for university programmes.

¹⁸ Many youths highlighted the difficulties they faced in gathering sufficient funds for a dowry, for example, explaining that they could not afford to marry. The high costs of funerals are equally problematic. Residents frequently rely on community fundraising, or occasionally on powerful patrons, to meet such costs.

¹⁹ The pervasive requirement of *kitu kidogo* – meaning ‘something small’ and often employed as a euphemism for a ‘bribe’ – often prevents individuals from obtaining important documents such as birth certificates, school certificates, or passports, for example. Indeed, a significant number of interviewees explained that during the post-election violence they took great risks to prevent such documents from being destroyed or stolen.

culture of insecurity, raises the potential for criminal activity²⁰ and maintains underlying feelings of ‘frustration, anger, ignorance, despair and cynicism’ (Uvin 1998: 107). While these conditions are a form of violence in and of themselves and are, to a degree, intricately related to the ubiquity of more direct forms of violence in everyday life, the most noteworthy element of structural violence, and what Winton (2004: 167) suggests ‘relates most significantly to the emergence of everyday reactionary violence’, is inequality.

Relative deprivation and unequal life chances pervade Kenyan society and the ‘top dogs’ are able to gain more out of their interactions with social and institutional structures than others (Galtung 1990: 293). The gap between rich and poor is wide, and ever-widening,²¹ with the bottom 10 percent of households currently estimated to control less than 1 percent of the country’s income, whilst the top 10 ten percent of households control over 40 percent (Society for International Development 2004: 3). My interviewees are acutely aware of this divide, and often mention the corrupt practices of the political elite which serve to consolidate their positions of power, wealth and privilege. Many draw attention, for example, to the problem of land grabbing amongst the elite,²² to the fact that politicians are ‘eating’ the money from projects intended for people at the grassroots,²³ and there is a pervasive sentiment that ‘the poor man is the rich man’s keeper’ (D, Group Interview with ROCP youth group, Makina, Kibera, 17 November 2009). In addition to this recognised corruption within the ruling classes, the lavish lifestyles of the rich in Kenya are highly visible and in some cases the proximity of affluent neighbourhoods to urban settlements is a daily reminder of the

²⁰ This issue is taken up later in the chapter, but it should be emphasised here that I am not drawing a direct causal relationship between structural violence and criminal activity, and especially not to *violent* crime. Such a characterisation neglects the agency of local level actors and fails to appreciate the nuances of the ways in which people negotiate uncertainty.

²¹ It is generally accepted that inequalities between rich and poor have increased significantly during the post-colonial period.

²² For an account of the proliferation of land grabbing in Kenya see Klopp (2000).

²³ The *Kazi kwa Vijana* [Work for Youth] project, for example, was consistently mentioned throughout the ten months of my fieldwork, and in virtually all field sites. Interviewees indicated that local elites had siphoned off funds intended for youth employment projects to enrich themselves, or at best had distributed them only to a limited number of youths from within their own community.

deep inequalities inherent within society. Walking through the Congo neighbourhood of Kawangware each day, for example, Isaac, my local assistant, repeatedly drew my attention to the luxurious apartment complexes of Lavington that are separated from the slum by a single concrete wall, the top of which is lined with barbed wire. Almost every day he would tell me that it was ‘deeply painful’ for him to look at such houses from his position, standing, as we were, on a muddy dirt track, lined with iron-sheet houses, sewage and litter. Residents of urban slums are acutely aware of the deep-rooted economic disparities in Kenya, and of their disadvantaged position in society. However, despite this clear awareness of the inherent class divisions, frustrations relating to inequality and discrimination are just as frequently expressed in regionalised, territorialised, and ethnicised terms. Indeed, anger at, and resentments over, ‘horizontal inequalities’ (Stewart 2000), both perceived and real, repeatedly obscure the inequalities apparent in other category memberships such as class and gender.²⁴

Despite their residency in urban areas, the vast majority of my interviewees emphasised the broader regional inequalities in society. They drew attention to the uneven development between provinces which, given the geographical distribution of ethnic communities, maps relatively neatly onto ethnicity. Both the product of unintended modernisation processes and colonial settlement and investment patterns, as well as the result of deliberately discriminatory policy choices in the post-colonial era,²⁵ these regional imbalances have undoubtedly engendered significant differences in the living standards of

²⁴ In terms of gender, while the disparity in opportunities is shrinking, women remain less likely than men to be employed, more likely to drop out of school and consequently more likely to live in poverty (World Bank 2008: 70).

²⁵ While I have suggested elsewhere that the origins and evolution of inequalities are of less importance to the student of contemporary ethnic violence than the way in which they define and speak to the present context, it should be noted that the favouring of particular regions and communities in the post-colonial era, particularly during the Moi years, but also under Kenyatta and Kibaki, has contributed significantly to the understanding of politics as a zero-sum game, and has exacerbated ethnic tensions and resentments. I thank Nic Cheeseman for drawing my attention to this point.

different communities. A government analysis of the geographic dimensions of well-being indicates that the highest percentage of individuals living below the poverty line are located in Nyanza (65 percent), while the lowest are resident in Central (31 percent), and that the Rift Valley Province is the highest contributor to national poverty at 22 percent (Republic of Kenya 2005). These statistics are further borne out by the fact that infant mortality rates are almost three times higher in Nyanza than they are in Central Province (Maoulidi 2011: 14), and that the life expectancy of someone living in Meru is almost double that of someone living in Mombasa (Society for International Development 2004: 25). The doctor to patient ratio in North-Eastern Province is 1: 120,000, in comparison to 1: 20,700 in the country as a whole (Society for International Development 2004: v), and people living in this forgotten region often refer to trips to Nairobi as ‘going to Kenya.’²⁶ Indeed, a newspaper article which appeared in 2004 following the release of a report detailing these inequalities asserts, ‘it turns out that resources and services are better in Central Province, which leads in nearly every type of well-being’ (*Daily Nation*, 27 October 2004). So, it is unsurprising then that many of my interviewees exclaimed that the best schools, universities and hospitals are located in Central Province, that the region has better roads and infrastructure, and more widespread provision of services such as electricity and water, and that the Kikuyu community as a whole have far better opportunities in life than other groups in Kenya. Nevertheless, this framing of grievance in terms of material, regional inequalities is interesting coming from urban residents, particularly those who have been born and raised in Nairobi, and who, arguably, have felt its material effects to a far lesser extent. When this notion was put to some of them during the interview, many alluded to an additional socio-psychological underpinning of this resentment – to feelings of group worth and pride attached to perceptions of ‘advanced’ and

²⁶ Again, I thank Nic Cheeseman for drawing my attention to these statistics and to the discourse within North-Eastern province which serve to illustrate the extent of regional inequalities in Kenya.

backward' communities – which exists in tandem with the more tangible dimensions of unequal life chances. For example,

N: Me, I'm a Waria, I'm a Somali. If there is a President who will run from my tribe, I can't vote for anyone else, it is obvious that I will vote for him // if someone from my own tribe stands, then I'll vote for him so that they put in development.

S: *Ok. But you live in Nairobi. So say for example, a Kikuyu living in Rift Valley, what does he care that Central is developed? He won't see the benefit because he doesn't live there.*

N: But that is not their motherland... They are proud to build in their home.

(N, Interview, Kobi, Kawangware, 4 March 2010)

Thus, material inequalities are also tied up with feelings of pride, superiority and inferiority.

It is widely perceived then that the Kikuyu not only have a better standard of living, but that they have far greater opportunities for advancement and for procuring wealth and economic stability than other communities. Indeed, Rothchild's analysis of Kenya in the early years of independence is remarkably transferable to the contemporary context:

Imbalances of opportunity between tribal groupings remain a stubborn fact of life in Kenya today. Although they may be attributable to a variety of inherited circumstances, these inequalities inevitably cause tensions to rise to the surface. The success of Central Province (chiefly Kikuyu in composition) in securing support for social welfare activities and, in consequence, in building up a pool of trained manpower and an array of commercial enterprises has not been lost upon the less advantaged peoples of the country (Rothchild 1969: 691-692).

The majority of my non-Kikuyu interviewees expressed their belief that the Kikuyu have been, and continue to be, favoured in all aspects of life, from land acquisition to employment opportunities:

But it is not just land. It is employment. You can't find Nubians in government. There are just Kikuyus everywhere. Nairobi City Council – they live there. There are no Nubians or other tribes like them. Another issue, during this election post you find the director is a Kikuyu. All government organisations, Kenya Power, Kenya Central Bank: Kikuyu. Everywhere. This is what people are unhappy with. Any job. They're even in the mortuary. They're there. They are just working there. // The Kikuyu are big robbers, the bank, the highway, the wealthy people are them. They are in each and every category (TF, Interview, Ayany, Kibera, 18 November 2009).

The economic prosperity and life opportunities of ordinary Kikuyu are often overstated, however, and there is a persistent tendency to conflate class and ethnicity. One interviewee, a

well-educated, well-travelled employee of the Kenya Human Rights Commission, in a highly illustrative example of this exaggeration of Kikuyu wealth, states:

JK: You know Kenyans have a class *walala hoi, walala hai*.²⁷

S: *Well this is something I don't understand. Why do people see the Kikuyu as part of the higher classes only? Surely they can see that there are some poor Kikuyu living in Kibera with them?*

JK: In Kibera there are not. There are no poor Kikuyus. *Sindiyo*,²⁸ F?

F: You are right.

(JK, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 2 December 2009)

This distinct refusal to accept that there are any Kikuyu who are living in poverty is both extreme and absolutist, but not uncommon. Nevertheless, a softer version of the sentiment is perhaps more pervasive; people articulate the notion that 'The Kikuyu, some of them are not rich, you can't help everyone, but most benefited because of the Kenyatta era' (O, Interview, 56, Kawangware, 6 March 2010). Thus, these attitudes are a reflection of the macro-level narrative which asserts that 'it is not equal in eating the cake of Kenya, the Kikuyu have taken a big part' (PAD, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 15 December 2009). It is undoubtedly the case that historical processes and policies have given the Kikuyu an advantage in the economic sphere, and the widely acknowledged fact that business activity is dominated by members of this community is not wholly unjustified. However, despite the resilience of Kikuyu socio-economic dominance and the resentments it can cause, I would suggest that this is often a persisting rather than an active grievance, one that can be distorted or displaced by temporal and spatial dynamics.

Contemporary perceptions of inequality and discrimination, that is active grievances, are heavily influenced by which community holds the presidential seat and so are, to some degree, temporally contingent. If the president is perceived to be favouring his own community in cabinet positions, ministries, civil service jobs, development projects and other

²⁷ Meaning the 'have-nots' and the 'haves', the very poor, and the very rich, respectively.

²⁸ Meaning 'Is that not right?'

dimensions of redistribution, whilst neglecting others, then grievances are directed towards that community. Under a Kikuyu government, therefore, in a country in which ethnic favouritism is not only prevalent, but also expected, and is certainly visible at the higher echelons of government, the anti-Kikuyu discourse is prominent. However, many interviewees suggest that ‘in Moi’s time the Kalenjin started to dominate’ (SM, Interview, Makina, Kibera 2 January 2010) and were similarly resented as they were perceived to have far better opportunities and assistance than others: ‘Like in Moi’s time the Kalenjin had many jobs in the country and big lands and many opportunities’ (YD, Interview, Pondamali, Nakuru, 24 June 2010). Furthermore, a number of interviewees suggested that should Raila be elected President, it will not be long until other communities come to resent the Luo. Thus, as a resident of Kibera surmises:

The Luos // they had the idea that “it’s our turn to eat”, that they would’ve gone on and had a Luo cabinet. Then we would all be against the Luo. Why do people resent the Kikuyu? That is one reason. At one time people resented the Kalenjin. In 2002 they sacked all the Kalenjin ministers, including the head of the civil service. So the cycle would repeat and people would’ve resented the Luo (AB, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 13 December 2009).

Moreover, narratives of ethnic favouritism, dominance and superiority are affected by the identity of local MPs, councillors and chiefs and consequently there is a spatial dimension to the perception of ethnic inequality. In Kibera, for example, there is a prominent understanding that the Luo community have benefitted the most from local development projects, and many non-Luo residents express resentment at the ‘superior’ and ‘arrogant’ attitude displayed by members of that community in the area. For example, a Luhya resident of Kianda states:

Even to date the Luos... these are people... it is their behaviour, someone’s behaviour can make someone hate you and the Luos, the way they behave... So no one can say these are good to me. Most people in Kibera don’t want that tribe because they are so many. There’s nothing we can do though, we must just go on with life (DC, Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 10 December 2009).

A Nubian police officer who lives in Makina articulates a similar sentiment when he states ‘up there [in Gatuikera] they believe they are more superior because their man is the Prime Minister. So they think they can do anything. // They believe they are more superior than other people. The Kikuyu, they are humble’ (PC, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 13 November 2009). And another resident claims, ‘If you are not a Luo then you can’t get a job’ (BG, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 21 December 2009), countering the macro-narrative of Kikuyu dominance in employment opportunities. Similarly, many residents of Kawangware explain that in neighbouring Kangemi the MP, Fred Gumo, assists his Luhya community at the expense of others with regards to investments, loans and bursaries. Unequal distributions of resources certainly operate in the arena of local politics, and perceptions of domination and subordination exist at the level of intra-urban relations. Thus, prejudices and resentments of other communities are, to an extent, locally contextualised and they can serve as a counter-narrative to the wider anti-Kikuyu sentiment within Kenyan society. This illustrates the multi-vocality of ethnicity which is produced through lived experience.

*Cultural Violence and the Discourse of Autochthony*²⁹

Macro-level tensions related to socio-economic and political superiority are further accentuated, magnified, and sometimes complexified by the territorialised identity narratives which pervade Kenyan society, and the inherent ‘cultural violence’ that is attached to them. Galtung (1990: 291) identifies ‘cultural violence’ as something that ‘makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right – or at least not wrong.’ Drawing upon discourses of autochthony, local level actors in ethnicised spaces construct and reproduce conceptualisations of ethnic citizenship, imposing a ‘subordinate social status’ (Shipton 1992: 362) and reduced civic rights upon ‘immigrants’ and minorities within ‘their’ areas, in a clear

²⁹ This section draws heavily upon arguments set out in Jenkins (2012).

example of cultural violence. That is to say, that ‘immigrants’ are understood to be ‘guests’ and visitors who have been invited, and are allowed to stay, in an area on the condition that they abide by the host’s rules of hospitality. Consequently, the perception that ‘guests’ are abusing the hospitality of their hosts in some way can engender deep resentments and feelings of animosity, and in certain circumstances can provoke violent punishment. A Nubian resident of Kibera states:

You’ve been welcomed by the Nubians here, keep in mind people, it will cost you to go to someone else’s land. I cannot just go to Kakamega. I’ll not claim that it is mine, it belongs to someone (JK, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 2 December 2009).

The ‘rules’ of hospitality are remarkably consistent across space, and relate almost exclusively to issues of power and control over resources, and the feelings of superiority such dominance produces. It is a widely-held perception that the ‘owners’ of a particular space should not only control it politically, but should also be the ones to benefit from the resources associated with it. Autochthons expect, and in many ways demand, that they be favoured in the distribution of land, business, employment opportunities, development projects, school bursaries, loans and other such forms of aid and assistance. Autochthony, then, justifies discrimination. This discrimination of ‘guests’ undoubtedly produces frustrations and resentments amongst minority communities. For example, in a Luo dominated neighbourhood in Kawangware, members of the Kikuyu community claim that they are regularly denied access to water from a local tap, and one of my interviewees laments, ‘Not many Kikuyu can get water here, they’re abused and discriminated’ (MG, Interview, Kobi, Kawangware, 1 March 2010). However, it is in the challenge immigrant communities pose to native dominance that the most acute grievances and fears seem to reside.

Territorialised identity narratives have constructed deep-rooted beliefs that the economic resources associated with particular spaces ‘belong’ to the native or majority community, and consequently, when it is perceived that ethnic minorities are seeking to

appropriate and exploit these resources, to dominate in an area which does not belong to them, resentments can become explosive. One interviewee vehemently exclaims:

That's what happens with the Kikuyu. Many of them live outside Central, they're there for business and they go to the rural areas and they take the wealth from there and then they start oppressing people there, stealing their resources. // They exhaust the area // so we need things to devolve and companies and infrastructure to be set up in different parts of the country so people can benefit (BPNU, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 24 March 2010).

The issue of land and the historical injustices associated with its redistribution and allocation following the colonial period is perhaps the most obvious example of a tangible resource perceived to rightfully belong to a particular community, but which has been 'stolen' by other groups. This is most acutely felt in the Rift Valley context given the settlement schemes which litter the province, but it is also apparent elsewhere, particularly in Kibera.³⁰ One Nubian resident, for example, states, 'We welcomed the Luos but now there is a problem with title deeds. They don't want the Nubians to get the title deeds and we are the ones who invited them here!' (BD, Interview, Ayany, Kibera, 17 November 2009). It is regarded as unjust that other communities should own land and possess title deeds when members of the host community do not. However, as alluded to in the quote above, notions of 'ownership' extend far beyond such highly visible resources. Geographically-contingent economic activities, for example, such as fishing in Nyanza and Coastal Province, and the growth of sugar cane in Kakamega, and of miraa in Meru, are frequently understood as 'belonging' to the native community and the perception that other ethnic groups dominate the employment opportunities associated with them is resented. A significant number of my interviewees suggested that the location of particular ministries in Nairobi, for example, has engendered an unacceptable Kikuyu bias in sectors which rightfully belong to other groups:

³⁰ Former Sudanese soldiers were allocated the land of Kibera by the colonial regime. However, these historical claims to the land made by the Nubian community have been subverted not only by the numerical dominance of the Luo community, but also by the failure of the Kenyan government to recognise their legitimacy.

You know Central doesn't plant tea. In Western... the fish are from Western, but the head office is in Nairobi. Why not put the head office in Nyanza? The sugar office in Kakamega? Why do they all come to Nairobi? You travel to Nairobi for something in Western, but you want all the resources to yourself (SIL, Woodley Market, 22 November 2009).

Moreover, in the urban neighbourhoods of the micro-level arena, the dominance of housing or businesses in territories which are 'owned' by another community engenders grievances and resentments. In many of the slums in Nairobi, for example, my interviewees were frustrated by the fact that most of the landlords in 'their' areas were Kikuyu. By extracting rent from their tenants, these Kikuyu landlords are seen to be taking money away from the majority community, and benefitting at the expense of the host group. Indeed, perceptions of such disproportionate advantage are particularly objectionable when it is understood that immigrants and minorities have their own rural homes or urban territories in which they are able to dominate. As a Nubian resident of Kibera states, 'Tribes like the Luo want to eat with us on the table, but that is not fair. You have your home' (YB, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 17 December 2009).

Intimately related to this issue of economic dominance is the belief that the native community should have more political say in their territory³¹ and that minority groups should not oppose the leanings of their hosts. That is to say, 'guests' are expected to acquiesce to the political wishes of the majority: 'When you go to Rome you do what Romans do... if you are going to stay here you must do what the people here want' (ADW, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 15 January 2010). If guests are perceived to be in political opposition to the native group, 'their conceptualisation can be transformed from accepted guest to unwelcome occupier' and their (violent) eviction can be legitimised and justified (Jenkins 2012: 10). As one interviewee states, 'If you don't vote for our people you can't live here, you must vote

³¹ The conflation of political and economic control of space is the product of neo-patrimonial style rule and the 'our turn to eat' mentality of society. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

for our people’(R, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 18 March 2010). A Kikuyu resident of Eldoret similarly related the following revealing anecdote from the 2007 campaigns in his interview:

A friend told me “my friend, if you come to me and you see me eating meat, then you must also eat meat, the way that I am eating meat. You don’t eat greens because I am eating meat.” Without knowing that maybe if I eat meat, that meat can bring a problem to my stomach and maybe I can get sick. But he was telling me that “you must do what you get me doing.” It was because I am not one of them, so the meaning is that here in Eldoret we are like visitors and we must do what the owners do. If it is to vote for Ruto, then we must vote for Ruto and not to vote for someone else (JMW, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 3 February 2010).

Thus, during the 2007 campaigns this narrative was explicitly expressed and overtly articulated as minorities were harassed, intimidated, beaten up, and sometimes even killed for voicing their support of the ‘wrong’ party. Given this pervasive understanding of political ‘rights’ and the often violent punishment for any infringements, many ‘guests’ choose to work within the constraints of its framework. For example, a Kikuyu candidate who ran on an ODM ticket in Kibera in the 2007 elections states:

I’m in a volatile area, the Luo are the majority, whatever the outcome I better lose or win on their side // Supporting Raila, I feel safe. My people are in the minority, it would be foolish to go against the Luo in Kibera (SINJ, Interview, Kibera, 1 January 2010).

Several scholars who explore these issues of autochthony, and who have identified the theme of immigrant ‘rapacity’ and ‘ungratefulness’ (Marshall-Fratani 2006: 19; also Socpa 2006), suggest that democratisation processes in such contexts ignited questions over who could or could not run for office and where; that is, who ‘could or could not participate in a project new-style’ (Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005: 389; see also Geschiere and Jackson 2006: 4; Konings 2008: 203; Lynch 2011: 211). However, in Kenya at least, the language of hospitality has more nuanced implications than this; it is not the involvement of immigrants in politics *per se* which is at issue, but it is their involvement *in opposition* to the host community that is a source of tension. In fact, members of other groups are welcome to run

for office, to vote, and to participate actively in the political arena of a territory, so long as they do so according to the rules laid out by their hosts.³²

The host-guest narrative then, ‘has serious consequences for the distribution of power’ as hosts have the right to ‘decide on the rules of the visit and accordingly to “put their foot down” when the guest does not conform’ (Gullestad 2002: 54). Punishment for perceived infringements of these rules are justified and legitimised by the language of autochthony and belonging. The 2007-2008 post-election violence can be understood, at least in part, as native groups ‘putting their foot down’ after persistent abuses of hospitality by the Kikuyu, including the progressive ‘theft’ of resources and the attempt to gain political control of areas which do not belong to them by voting against the wishes of their hosts. The way in which this cultural violence fed into the dynamics of the 2007-2008 crisis is explored at length in Chapter Seven.

The Normalisation of Violence

In addition to, and indeed intricately connected with, these less visible – though no less significant – structural and cultural dimensions of violence, is a more noticeable ubiquity of directly violent action within Kenyan society. During the ten months I was in Kenya I witnessed a number of violent acts ranging from domestic disputes to interpersonal brawls, gang violence, mob justice, state-citizen confrontations (between police and urban youth), and larger-scale inter-community clashes. In this section I examine this ‘culture of violence’³³

³² See Jenkins (2012) for a more comprehensive articulation of this nuance.

³³ Pécaut (1999: 142) raises an objection to the use of this term suggesting that the invocation of culture as an explanatory framework can reflect a ‘lazy attitude’ and assume a tautological aspect. While I accept the potential dangers of its use, I think that they originate from a misunderstanding of its basis. It is not that culture *explains* violence per se, but rather that violence has become an integral part of culture; that is, it has become normalised, routinised and accepted as a legitimate response to certain situations. Thus, in my understanding, Pécaut’s (1999: 162) notion of a ‘*banalization* of violence’ (original emphasis), can be equated with ‘culture of violence’ and consequently I use such terms interchangeably.

(Simpson, Mokwena and Segal 1992; cf. Hamber 1999: 114; Steenkamp 2005: 254), arguing that violent action has become normalised and, in some sectors of society, it is perceived to be a legitimate response to certain situations. As Branch (2009: 1) states, ‘put simply, Kenyans have become accustomed to endemic social and political violence’ and as such, it is largely accepted and tolerated as a solution to everyday challenges and social conflicts (Steenkamp 2005: 254; cf. Harris 2003). I focus here on four key interconnected elements of this ubiquitous violence in Kenya: crime, mob justice, vigilantism, and revenge.

Kenya experiences high crime rates, particularly in the capital, which has earned the nickname ‘Nairobbery’ and is often spoken of in the same context as the notoriously violent cities of Johannesburg, Lagos and Cairo (Gimode 2001: 300). While debates are ongoing regarding the exact nature of the relationship, it is nevertheless widely accepted that poverty, inequality, unemployment and lack of opportunity are significant determinants of crime and violence (Hsieh and Pugh 1993; Vanderschuren 1996; Fajnzylber, Lederman, and Loayza 2002; Briceno-Leon and Zubillaga 2002; Winton 2004). Many of my interviewees, echoing this scholarship, suggest that the high crime rates in their neighbourhoods are intimately connected to the poor living conditions, unequal life chances, and the large contingent of ‘idle youth’, which characterise the urban scene. One member of a gang in Kibera, for example states, ‘We are not employed. We have to get each and everything on the table. We have no choice. If I have to gun somebody down, I’ll do it. It is our daily bread.’ (D, Group Interview with ROCP youth group, Makina, Kibera 17 November 2009). Similarly, a friend with whom I worked in Kibera often told stories of his days as a drug dealer and during an interview with his friend, he recalled:

F: During that time I used to live on three hundred dollars a day. During that time I used to sell heroin //

S: *What made you stop if you were getting paid so much?*

F: Ah, you know the job is risk. You have to be much more security. You need something for protection [*he makes a gun gesture with his hand*]. Your life is in

danger all the time from policemen. But young people are jobless // If you want your child to eat, you must pay for shelter. If you don't have any money – you go outside.
(F. in Interview with WAW, Bombolulu, Kibera, 11 November 2009)

Moser and Holland (1997: 23; cf. Moser and McIlwaine 2004: 95), similarly draw attention to the widespread perception amongst urban communities in Jamaica that unemployment is a direct cause of poverty and that this, in turn, relates to levels of economic violence. Criminal activity in Kenyan society is wide-ranging and is certainly not *necessarily* of a violent nature. Pick-pocketing, cons, and petty theft for example, are common acts in which direct confrontation is largely, and indeed ideally, avoided. Nevertheless, violent crime is pervasive; Ruteere and Pommerolle (2003: 593), for example, note that ‘the almost daily media reports of incidents of violent robbery, recovery of guns by the police, car-jackings, and other more or less violent crimes provide a glimpse of the crime situation in the country.’ These high crime rates contribute significantly to creating a climate of fear and insecurity in which people must learn to navigate their surroundings. Many of my interviewees, for example, claim that they do not enter particular territories unless they are with someone who lives there, expressing sentiments such as ‘down there is very dangerous’ (HASS, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 15 December 2009). Similarly, a large number of residents, particularly women, ensure that they are home before it gets too late, or arrange for an escort of youths to walk them to their door after dark. These practices are routinized and largely adopted unconsciously, but they are indicative of an acute climate of insecurity. Indeed, such an environment constructs and maintains a ubiquity of fear, and even petty acts of criminality can escalate into violence at any given moment. As one interviewee states in his description of the manner in which gangs operate: ‘They get you like this [*he demonstrates by placing his arm around his neck*] and within one second everything is out from your pockets – first your phone then your wallet. If you refuse they can kill you’ (AB, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 11

November 2009). Moreover, criminal activity can provoke violent reactions through mob justice and retaliation.

Informal or ‘mob’ justice is, perhaps, the most visible and the most widely accepted and tolerated form of violence in Kenyan society. In Chapter Two I recounted a particularly extreme incident of ‘necklacing’³⁴ which took place in Kibera, but other less drastic forms of mob justice are more common, and were witnessed regularly throughout the course of my research. The roots of this normalisation of violent punishment are to be found partly in the institutional violence of a corrupt and inefficient police force and judiciary system, and frustrations with the relative impunity of criminal activity. Following the necklacing of the thief in Gatuikera, I sought to make sense of people’s reactions, or indeed lack thereof, questioning them on why the thief had been killed rather than handed over to the police. The answer was almost uniform: had they left the police to deal with him, he would have been able to buy his freedom with *kitu kidogo* and would have been back in the village, stealing from them again the very next day. Furthermore, the distrust and resentment for the police stems from the apparently extensive practice of extortion in which officers are seen to engage. One interviewee jokes with his friends that a certain member of the police has ‘turned me into his customer. Every day he arrests me and wants something. And sometimes I don’t have something’ (D, Group Interview with ROCP youth group, Makina, Kibera, 17 November 2009).³⁵ Consequently informal justice has, in many instances, become the ‘preferred alternative to the criminal justice system’ which is viewed with ‘suspicion and scepticism’ (Hamber 1999: 119).³⁶ Mob justice is frequently associated with vigilante groups, and while the necklacing of the thief in Gatuikera was one such case of vigilante-led justice,

³⁴ The practice of placing a tyre, sometimes filled with petrol, over the victim’s head and setting it on fire.

³⁵ Ruteere and Pommerolle (2003: 603) identify a similar dynamic in Kangemi, and suggest that the reluctance to call the police in to assist in situations has blurred the lines between community policing and vigilantism.

³⁶ This lack of faith in the system is paralleled in the refusal to use the courts to appeal the results of the 2007 elections. This issue is discussed in Chapter Six.

there are countless other examples where the ‘punishers’ are simply those who witnessed the crime. Thus vigilantism appears to operate ‘together with somewhat sporadic group lynchings’ (Winton 2004: 172) in the enactment of informal justice. I witnessed three significant³⁷ instances of mob justice, only one of which was carried out by an established vigilante group, indicating that the practice is normalised and legitimised outside of these groups. This legitimisation of mob justice, of localised punishments for crimes and misdemeanours, underscored some of my interviewees’ framings of their participation in the post-election violence, and they suggested that they were ‘punishing’ the Kikuyu ‘thieves’ for ‘stealing the votes.’ Indeed, it could be argued that elements of the post-election crisis were a large-scale enactment of mob justice, a legitimised punishment for a perceived crime. The employment of the practice of necklacing during the crisis can be seen as symbolic of this: the Kikuyu were ‘thieves’ and as such were subjected to the typical punishment for this crime.

The rise of vigilantism is often regarded as a response to the ‘widespread disillusionment with the inability of the state to provide security’ (Meagher 2007: 90) and ‘a perception of the incapacity of the police to tackle criminality effectively’ (Anderson 2002: 542).³⁸ Certainly in my own research members of such groups tended to characterise themselves in this way, suggesting that they had ‘taken on the role of the police in this area’ (B, Interview, Gatuikera, Kibera, 15 November 2009). Schönteich (1999) argues that vigilantism is intimately connected to the rise of private security firms in affluent areas,

³⁷ By significant I mean that they were carried out by large numbers of people, and the victim was either very badly injured or killed. There were a few other cases of what could be described as informal or mob justice, but in these incidents threats and warnings were issued without physical violence, or they were not prolonged or large-scale.

³⁸ The rise of vigilantism in the African context is far more complex than is suggested here. A comprehensive analysis remains outside the scope of this research. However, Meagher (2007: 90-91) has identified two broad schools of thought within the growing literature on vigilantism: the first emphasises cultural elements and the reversion to ‘traditional institutions for the maintenance of law and order’, while the second sees vigilantism as related to ‘opportunism’ within a ‘context of social disorder.’ For studies of vigilante groups in the Kenyan context see in particular Anderson (2002) and Kagwanja (2003, 2006).

suggesting that it is ‘the poor man’s version of private security’ and certainly their self-characterisation would correspond with this view. However, while vigilante groups characterise themselves in such a way, their assumption that the silence of local residents equates with a tacit approval of their tactics is often misguided. Indeed, while a few of my interviewees spoke of them favourably, as providing an element of security, others characterised them as petty and violent criminals extorting money from the local community. Vigilantism not only further entrenches a normalised violence within society through its spearheading of informal justice and through the often threatening manner in which they extort ‘payment’ for their services, but it often also has the effect of heightening underlying fears and insecurity, rather than reducing them.

The harassment is... like the Mungiki there right now are very small youth and they’re not understanding, they know very well that this guy is a boda boda driver and he meets with him in Pondamali he’ll say, “Hey you! Give me fifty shillings!” What can you do? If you refuse it will be a problem, if you beat him then they’ll come many, because now they are the majority, so to cool the issue you just have to give it to him to avoid what will happen (HR, Interview, Pondamali Nakuru, 26 June 2010).

Finally and relatedly, in many of the urban arenas in which my research was conducted, ‘revenge and retribution have become commonplace’ (Simpson, Mokwena and Segal 1992). This culture of revenge not only justifies and perpetuates violence, but it can also escalate relatively banal incidents into more widespread violent inter-group confrontation. A resident of 4B in Mathare describes the potential for verbal abuse, for example, to escalate into larger scale violence through this mentality of revenge:

Like for example, maybe there is a highlight³⁹ somewhere and maybe she is a Kikuyu, and she is passing this area. When she passes and we here are a group of Luo we will greet her. If she refuses we will abuse her. Then she goes back to her area and tells the boyfriend that “I passed there and they abused me”, then the boyfriend will be angry and he will come here and the war will start there. If he beats me then I will go and take my comrades and we go to fight them, and he will go and get his comrades, so this is the way the Luo and Kikuyu have a grudge in this area (EP, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 30 April 2010).

³⁹ Sheng for a beautiful woman.

This quote not only illustrates the potential for teasing, verbal abuse and insult to escalate into a more serious incident of direct violence but it also recalls earlier arguments regarding the ease with which incidents can become ethnicised in such a territorialised and ethnically-sensitive society.⁴⁰ Similarly, the potential for small, interpersonal disputes to escalate into larger communal clashes is evident in an incident which took place in Kibera in October 2009. The situation arose over a disputed piece of land in the Luhya-dominated Mashimoni neighbourhood. The violence reportedly began when a group of Nubian youth demolished kiosks that had been erected by some Luhya traders outside of a church. There was some evidence to suggest that the owner of the land had, in fact, hired them to do so. Members of the Luhya community subsequently retaliated by burning the church to the ground, killing a Nubian boy in the process. The situation quickly escalated as the Nubian community mobilised their youth. One interviewee, speaking two weeks later recalls:

You know two weeks ago there were some clashes? A Nubian boy was killed. So we met at Makina Mosque, we prayed first for the boy, then we went and buried the body, and after burying the body is when the boys went to fight. Because the one who had killed the boy had already killed three Nubian boys. So we went to fight to teach them a lesson, so they didn't do it again (BB, Interview, Makina, Kibera, November 18 2009).

In the following two days several houses were destroyed, three people were confirmed dead and several others were seriously injured as the communities fought (Wabalwa 2009). The escalation of seemingly minor, small scale interpersonal or group confrontations parallels the ways in which the post-election violence was triggered in the local context. Many of my

⁴⁰ Several interviewees indicate that this ethnicisation of minor events is even more pronounced since the post-election violence, and they suggest that inter-ethnic incidents are now dealt with far more severely than in-group situations. For example, several residents of Langas explained that Kikuyu matatu drivers no longer drive through Kisumu Ndogo, and Luo drivers no longer enter Corner Mbaya because if they should accidentally hit a pedestrian in these areas it could start an episode of serious retaliatory violence. One interviewee explains, 'Let's say if now a matatu driver is going through Kisumu Ndogo, if you hit someone and you're a Kikuyu, they won't leave you. And if you're a Luo and you come to Corner and there's an accident they'll not leave you' (CMY, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 16 January 2010).

interviewees explained that arguments and interpersonal conflicts within their areas sparked the violence which then grew exponentially. This is further explored in Chapter Six.

Episodes of large-scale and intense violence do not occur in a vacuum; their logic can be located within the contours of everyday life. This section has very briefly drawn attention to the ubiquity and normalisation of violence in Kenyan society, and has alluded to the parallel relationship between the practices and rationale of these everyday activities and the post-election crisis. In a climate of insecurity and fear, of impunity and ineffective policing, informal justice, revenge and retribution are, to a degree, legitimised. This sense of justification for the employment of violence to resolve social conflict undoubtedly underscored the violent response to the flawed elections of 2007.

Conclusion

Violence in its direct, structural and cultural forms is experienced, lived and enacted by ordinary people in periods of relative calm, and the ubiquity of these violent structures and processes, to a certain extent, negates the use of the term 'peace.' Thus, large-scale violence along identity lines cannot be understood in isolation from its social context, but rather should be recognised as part of a continuum of ethnically conflictual behaviours. Ethnic prejudices and resentments do not sit dormant, awaiting their ignition by ambitious elites, but rather flow through the contours of everyday life. They are produced, reproduced and transformed through daily interactions and experiences and a fine-grained analysis of these processes can be instructive for the student of ethnic violence. Negative ethnicity is circulated more explicitly, more intensively, and more vehemently in in-group settings and ethnicised spaces in Kenya. Resentments and frustrations pertaining to ethnic dominance and inequality are reinforced through everyday conversations and interactions in these spaces, significantly

influencing and shaping localised perceptions of, and relations with, ethnic others. Conversely, in more mixed environments inter-ethnic tensions are negotiated and deflected through social cuing, and negative rhetoric is seldom articulated in an overt and conflictual manner. Furthermore, while horizontal inequalities underpin ‘persisting’ macro-level grievances, ‘active’ resentments are both temporally and spatially contingent. In a winner-takes-all environment, communities that currently enjoy political dominance are predominantly the target of resentment, and consequently contemporary political alliances and circumstances can easily shift the boundaries of prejudice and animosity from one group to another. With regards to spatial contextuality, autochthonous discourses of belonging and exclusion can both reinforce the macro-narrative, and problematise it. Minorities in specific territories can come to harbour significant grievances towards the dominant group as they seek to impose an inferior citizenship status upon them in a performance of cultural violence, whilst dominant communities resent threats to their economic, political and cultural hegemony in their own territory. Thus, there is a multi-vocality to ethnicised resentment which persists beneath the level of the ‘ethnic group.’ Finally, this chapter has demonstrated that the logic which underscores the employment of violence in everyday settings extends into episodes of more widespread and large-scale conflicts; there is a distinct continuity between the violent practices of the everyday and those of the post-election crisis. Cultures of informal justice, revenge, criminality, and insecurity render violence a legitimate means of resolving social conflicts and, as such, go some way to explaining its use as a response to the flawed 2007 elections. Thus, violence is ubiquitous in Kenyan society and an understanding of its normalisation and its everyday workings is crucial to understanding the nature and dynamics of the post-election crisis. As Steenkamp (2005: 255) states:

This framework does not map the *causes of violence* but aims to provide an analytical mapping of the factors that create a context for violence where the use of violence is allowed and even encouraged. The question is not why are people violent, but rather

how are the norms of violence created and entrenched in society? Few or many members of society can share these norms and values, but the crux is that violence continues.

Chapter Five:

Ethnicity, Violence and the Local Politics of Kenyan Elections

Introduction

The previous two chapters have situated the 2007 elections in the context of a society characterised by a salient ethnic consciousness and a normalisation of violence. This chapter explores the ways in which both ethnicity and conflict define and influence the relationship between political elites and local level actors, and examines the role they play in Kenyan politics in general. As has already been noted in Chapter One, there is a heavy emphasis on elite mobilisation and the significance of ethnicised patronage networks in analyses of African politics, where it is assumed that ‘aspiring politicians must gain the support of their ethnic community’ and ‘bring valued resources back home’ (Steeves 2006: 214). Analyses of ethnic violence tend to emphasise this predominantly instrumental elite-mass relationship, arguing that the distribution of resources along ethnic lines and the zero sum nature of politics facilitate elite manipulations of identity and the organisation of violence. This chapter does not seek wholly to challenge this position, and it certainly does not preclude the mobilisation of ethnicity by elites. However, it does seek to develop a more nuanced understanding of this interaction between leaders and local level actors, and to offer a more subtle account of the rationale behind, and the complexities of, (violent) ethnic politics at the local level. Top-down processes of political mobilisation and incitement to violence interact with these bottom-up dynamics, and a failure to pay sufficient attention to localised pressures and agency results in a limited and partial understanding of the violent ethnic politics which mars Kenyan society.

The chapter begins by drawing attention to the value of the existing paradigm and highlighting the significance of its insights into the political culture in Kenya, confirming the importance of ethnic leaders, patronage networks and symbolic capital. However, it goes on to argue that elites are far from omnipotent figures in the mobilisation of ethnic actors, suggesting rather that they are themselves constrained by micro-level expectations and pressures. Moreover, the role of patronage in solidifying the ties between elites and local level actors is more nuanced than the direct exchange of benefit for political support, and is as much associated with localised hopes and fears for the future as it is with existing patronage flows. The chapter goes on to explore the local politics of voting behaviour, suggesting that socio-spatial structures and the local level actors within them, often operating independently of political leaders, can significantly constrain political debates and contestations. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the use of violent ‘ethnic militias’ and ‘vigilantes’ in political campaigns, suggesting that they are neither as homogeneous nor as centralised as they might initially appear, nor are they necessarily ‘ethnic’ in any meaningful sense.

The Personalisation of Kenyan Politics

Many, if not most, studies of African politics have drawn attention to the personalised and informal nature of the African state. In this neo-patrimonial model¹ it is understood that political elites largely attain and retain loyalty and support, ward off opposition and silence critics through a privatised and informal distribution of wealth and benefits in the form of

¹ The term is derived from Weber’s (1947) concept of patrimonial authority and is commonly attributed to Médard (1982). It has become something of a catch-all concept which obscures the nuances of the numerous and varied understandings of the phenomenon. Moreover, some scholars, while ascribing to the fundamental elements of a neo-patrimonial model, do not explicitly use the term. A detailed exploration of the concept and its uses lies outside the scope of this thesis, but for an excellent and thorough analysis see Erdmann and Engel (2007).

jobs, promotions, development projects, loans, bursaries and other such favours (Abrahamsen 2001: 84). Some scholars go as far as to suggest that ‘the system is “structured” so to speak, not by institutions, but by the politicians themselves’ (Jackson and Rosberg 1982: 19). While the personalisation of politics is acute and is central to the discussion in this chapter, it should be stressed here that the legal-rational institutions which exist alongside these informal and privatised networks of distribution are not simply a façade (Erdmann and Engel, 2007: 104); indeed it is the existence of both forms of legitimacy which distinguishes the modern neo-patrimonial African state from the Weberian model of patrimonial authority. Nevertheless, despite the fierce debates over its nature and operation, as well as the conceptual confusion that has emerged within the extensive body of literature, the prevalence of neo-patrimonialism as the defining characteristic of African politics is largely undisputed.² Undoubtedly there are subtle and important differences between Roth’s (1968) ‘personal rulership’, Lemarchand and Legg’s (1972) ‘clientelism’, Bayart’s (1993) ‘politics of the belly’, Van de Walle’s (2003) ‘presidentialism’, Chabal and Daloz’s (1999) ‘informal politics’ and the ‘neo-patrimonialism’ coined by Médard (1982) and adopted by countless others, nevertheless they each emphasise the personalisation of politics and resource distribution on the continent. Moreover, the clientelistic networks of patronage which characterise these regimes are assumed to operate predominantly along ethnic lines and the legitimacy of politicians is said to ‘rest on their ability to provide for their own (mostly ethnic) constituents’ (Chabal, 2005: 4). Consequently, politics becomes a zero-sum game, elections are ‘a struggle among ethnic communities to put one of their own into a position of political power’ (Posner 2007: 1305), and ethnic leaders or ‘kings’ (Adar 1998) are central to

² However, scholars have recently begun to question whether neo-patrimonialism, clientelism and patronage are sufficient for understanding African politics and voting behaviour, and they call for further in-depth research in this area. See for example Hansen (2003); Gyimah-Boadi (2007); Erdmann, Basedau and Mehler (2007); and Lindberg and Morrison (2008). This chapter seeks to build upon this literature. While not dismissing the importance of the existing model, its overly materialist emphasis on the ethnically-structured exchange of goods and services for political support fails to explain some of the nuances and complexities of Kenyan politics.

political competition. While this chapter as a whole seeks to offer a more nuanced understanding of the role of ethnicity and the relationship between elites and local level actors, existing analyses do offer important insights into Kenyan politics. My own research confirms that, at the macro-level at least, party organisation and electoral competition are centred around powerful ethnic spokesmen who demand and, to a large extent receive, substantial loyalty and political support from their respective communities on the understanding that they, in turn, will receive certain benefits and gains from their leader's position of power.

While Kenyan elections certainly 'cannot simply be understood as an ethnic census' (Cheeseman 2008: 172), voting patterns nevertheless indicate that presidential candidates have historically enjoyed overwhelming support from their own communities. Given the regional concentration of ethnic groups, these patterns are, to an extent, visible in provincial election results. In the 1992 elections the two leading Kikuyu candidates, Kibaki and Matiba garnered an overwhelming 95 percent of the votes from Kikuyu-dominated Central Province, whilst Raila Odinga similarly overshadowed opposition in Nyanza, winning 75 percent of the votes, and Moi obtained 68 percent in his home region of Rift Valley (Throup and Hornsby 1998: 435). These patterns were repeated in the 1997 elections where Kibaki, now unchallenged by another Kikuyu candidate, took 90 percent of Central Province, and both Raila and Moi again enjoyed majority support in their respective regions – the former winning 75 percent of his province's votes, and the latter 72 per cent (Cowen and Kanyinga 2002: 142). In 2002, leading politicians from the Luo, Luhya, Kamba and Kikuyu communities, having suffered the consequences, and learned the lessons, of a divided opposition in 1992 and 1997, formed an alliance under Kibaki's National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), and thus pooling the support of each community, NARC defeated Uhuru Kenyatta and succeeded in ousting KANU from power. I strongly disagree, then, with Kagwanja's

(2006: 51) suggestion that ‘NARC’s victory [in 2002] signified the triumph of ethnic pluralism and national rejuvenation’; rather, the election once again highlighted the prevalence of ethnicised voting patterns, as each ethnic region demonstrated overwhelming support for the party with which their leading politician was affiliated. NARC was victorious in the Luo, Luhya, and Kamba provinces, as well as in Kibaki’s Nyeri district, whilst KANU dominated Rift Valley and Uhuru Kenyatta’s Kiambu region.³ Given this precedent, it is unsurprising that the 2007 elections similarly demonstrated ethnicised voting patterns at the presidential level, with Kibaki’s PNU party dominating in Central Province with 96 percent of the vote, and Raila’s ODM party, which included leading Kalenjin, Luhya and Coastal community politicians, enjoying substantial support in the respective regions of Nyanza (81.7 percent), Rift Valley, (61.7 percent), Western (66.6 percent) and Coast (58.8 percent) as can be seen in Table 1.⁴

³ For a detailed breakdown of the results see the final report by the European Union Election Observation Commission (European Union 2003: 72ff.).

⁴The understanding of politics as largely ethnicised generated high expectations that PNU simply could not defeat ODM, as the latter carried the numbers of the Kalenjin, Luo, Luhya, and Coastal communities combined. This contributed to the certainty that the elections had been rigged. However, the depth of division within the Luhya community, as well the significant support for PNU in Eastern Province is often overlooked by local level actors.

Table 1
Number of Registered Voters and Official 2007 Presidential Election Results

PROVINCE	REGISTERED VOTERS	MWAI KIBAKI	RAILA ODINGA	KALONZO MUSYOKA	TURNOUT
NAIROBI	1,275,445	313,478 47.4%	288,922 43.6%	52,974 8%	662,038
COAST	1,178,537	197,354 32.8%	353,773 58.8%	38,878 6.5%	601,201
NORTH EASTERN	315,756	97,263 50.4%	91,440 47.4%	4,498 2.3%	192,965
EASTERN	2,374,763	840,805 52%	83,595 5.2%	726,782 45%	1,615,967
CENTRAL	2,186,936	1,643,421 96.4%	30,655 1.8%	11, 231 0.7%	1,704,004
RIFT VALLEY	3,358,381	916,112 35.7%	1,584,271 61.7%	34,334 1.3%	2,567,931
WESTERN	1,564,682	312,300 32.5%	639,246 66.6%	6,729 0.7%	960,109
NYANZA	2,041,680	262,627 16.8%	1,280,978 81.7%	4,470 0.3%	1,567,139
GRAND TOTAL	14,296,180	4,583,360 45.97%	4,352,880 43.65%	879,896 8.82%	9,971,354

Source: International Crisis Group (2008)

These statistics and party alignments draw attention to the individualism inherent in the Kenyan political system, highlighting its influence on the nature of political parties and pointing to the tactics employed by politicians in their pursuit of positions of power. The major political actors in contemporary Kenyan politics ‘make extensive use of “ethnic arithmetic”’ (Elischer 2010: 204), forging coalitions and alliances in an effort to mobilise a support base from as many different groups as possible, or in an effort to split the opposition. These alliances are inherently unstable, largely ‘coalitions of convenience’ (Elischer 2010:

204),⁵ and the parties which constitute them weak, little more than vessels through which elites can pursue their political ambitions. Figure 3 humorously depicts one such alliance which was dominating the political scene in Kenya from late 2009 into 2010.

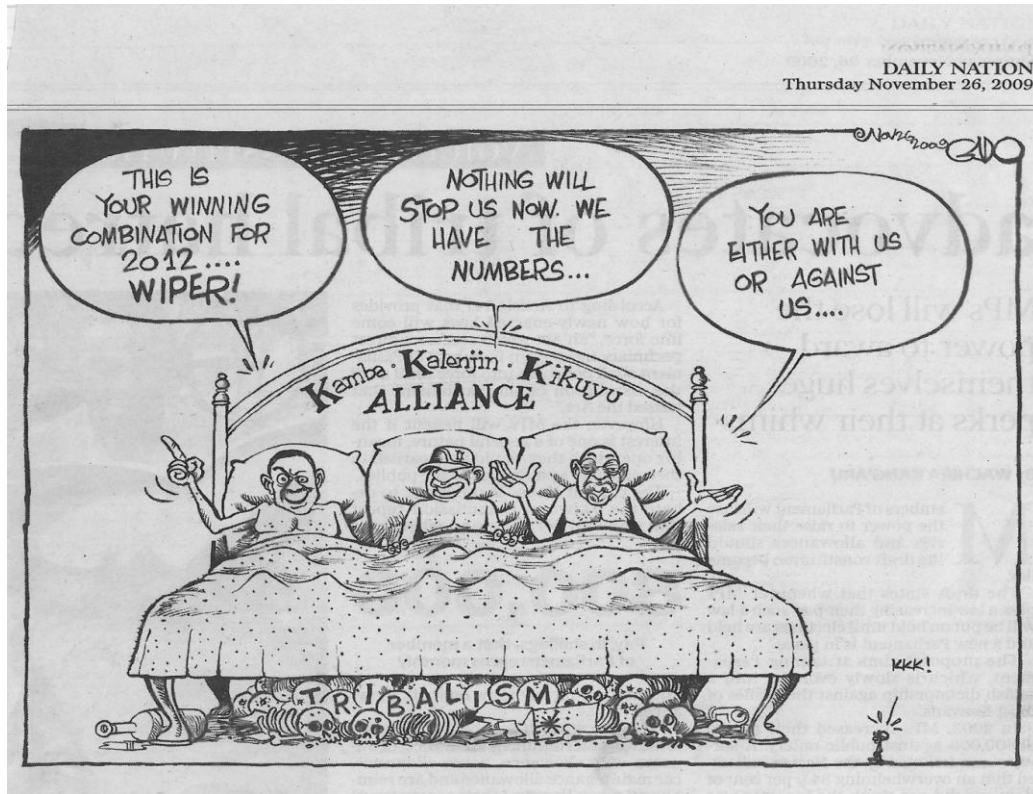


Figure 3: *Daily Nation*, 26 November 2009

The cartoon shows the leading Kamba, Kalenjin and Kikuyu politicians Kalonzo, Ruto and Uhuru in bed together, forming the KKK (Kamba-Kalenjin-Kikuyu) alliance in preparation for the 2012 elections,⁶ barely concealing the deadly tribalism that lurks beneath. Notably, these politicians were each prominent members of the three main opposing parties in 2007, with Kalonzo leading ODM-Kenya, Uhuru backing PNU, and Ruto a key member of ODM's pentagon.⁷ Thus, the KKK alliance is arguably a coalition of convenience, and as the cartoon

⁵ Indeed, an article that appeared in *The Standard* newspaper in 2007 joked that 'It's coalition season and tribal chiefs are the rave' (Tanui 2007).

⁶ The elections have since been rescheduled for March 2013. However, at the time the newspaper went to print they were expected to take place in December 2012.

⁷ The pentagon refers to the five most prominent members of ODM: Raila Odinga, William Ruto, Musalia Mudavadi, Charity Ngilu and Joseph Nyagah

depicts, it is designed to get ‘the numbers’ from these three communities in the forthcoming election.

Thus, many key players in Kenya are guilty of political nomadism, shifting from one party to another, from government to opposition, according to which position offers them the greatest potential for political advancement at any given moment. Raila Odinga, for example, joined the FORD-Kenya party in 1992, together with Luhya politicians Paul Muite and Kijana Wamalwa, in opposition to KANU. Following Odinga's death in 1994, Wamalwa and Raila tussled over the leadership of FORD-Kenya, and eventually the latter resigned to form his own NDP party in time for the 1997 elections. He later merged NDP with the KANU government and served in Moi's cabinet between 2001 and 2002. However, again following leadership disputes, Raila left KANU to form the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) just before the elections in 2002, joining forces with the NARC coalition under Kibaki's leadership. Following NARC's triumph relations soon degenerated between Kibaki and Raila and in 2004 the latter split off from the alliance to create the Orange Democratic Movement for the purposes of opposing the draft constitution in the 2005 referendum. The movement included, among others, William Ruto and Uhuru Kenyatta, against whom Raila had campaigned in the 2002 elections.⁸ More recently, Raila has again found himself in opposition to Uhuru and Ruto as he remains the leader of ODM, while they have combined to form another party in the lead-up to the next elections. Thus in the last two decades Raila has repeatedly shifted from government to opposition, from one party and one allegiance to another, very often finding himself allied with those whom he had previously opposed. Through all of this manoeuvring his Luo supporters have, for the most part, remained loyal. Similarly, less influential politicians competing for parliamentary or district seats, having

⁸ Kenyatta later pulled out of the ODM alliance in the lead-up to the 2007 elections to rejoin Kibaki's PNU party.

failed to secure a nomination with one party, often have no qualms about seeking a ticket with another, and nor, apparently, do their supporters. Thus, as Tanui, a journalist with *The Standard* newspaper, points out, in Kenya ‘political parties are weak and stand for nothing and all you need is an amalgamation of tribal kings’ (Tanui 2007). It is clear then that the centrality of individual politicians as ethnic leaders, kings or chiefs is crucial to an understanding of Kenyan politics. A Kalenjin youth summarises this political culture concisely when he states:

In Kenya, communities have given hopes to one leader, they choose a key leader, so if someone of your community has a strong political will, then whatever he says you will take it from him. People have invested much faith in their leader, so it is difficult to go against them. So for the Luo it is Raila, for the Kikuyu it is Kibaki, for the Kamba it is Kalonzo, for the Kalenjin, Ruto (NFF, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 6 June 2010).

While there are clear material and rational concerns underscoring this relationship between local level actors and political elites, there is also a non-rational, affective dimension which Kanyinga (1994: 67) has suggested is akin to an ‘uncritical admiration’ of and ‘quasi-religious faith’ in the ethnic spokesperson.⁹ This sentiment is echoed in one interviewee’s exclamation that, ‘I don’t know why they listen to Raila. Is Raila God, or what?!’ (ABW, Interview, Ayany, Kibera, 14 November 2009).¹⁰ A Taita youth similarly states that, ‘Politics is like a religion. It has this strong feeling inside you. // I don’t know how. It’s a religion. For the people, they can do anything for [their] leader’ (CHOC, Interview, Waithaka, 8 March 2010).

⁹ Kanyinga is referring specifically to Jarimogi Oginga Odinga’s popularity amongst his Luo community in the 1980s, but it can be translated, to some degree, to other elite-mass relationships in contemporary Kenya.

¹⁰ While the understanding that the loyalty of ethnic communities to their leaders relates to all communities, my interview material suggests that this devotion is, or is perceived to be, particularly pronounced amongst the Luo community. The term ‘Odingaism’ has been utilised not only by scholars and journalists, but also by Kenyans themselves. It could be suggested that the absence of any other strong Luo politicians who can realistically challenge Raila’s supremacy offers a partial explanation. However, the question remains as to whether there is something unique to Luo political history and identity construction which has contributed to this situation. A number of friends speculated that the poverty of Nyanza province has ‘brought them together’, for example.

However, despite the apparent loyalty of the spokesperson's supporters, the emphasis on the top-down mobilisation of ethnicity has a tendency to overstate the manipulative ability of elite actors and neglects the constraints placed upon them by local level agency and expectation. Support for an ethnic spokesperson is far from unquestioning. Indeed, there is a clear duality to the relationship between elites and local level actors in which both work to shape and influence each other. When asked how a community decides upon a leader, one interviewee explains that it is 'the person who they think has political will and he is in the government at that time' (NFF, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 6 June 2010). Thus, the ethnic 'king' or 'tribal chief' must not only be seen as having the capacity to deliver benefits to his community, but he must also be regarded as willing to do so. Leaders who, for whatever reason, are perceived to have betrayed the community, or who fail to live up to the expectations of providing for and defending the ethnic group, run the risk of losing their support base to another rising star. De Smedt's (2009: 597) conclusion that 'Raila is not able to exert complete control over his support base and... key constituents in Kibera do not automatically accept his authority' is applicable to other ethnic leaders in Kenyan politics. Indeed, it can be said that political elites are subject to 'ethnic entrapment' in that they must often tailor their actions to meet, or at least be seen to meet, the ethnic expectations of their followers (Goldsworthy, 1982: 109-110). A Luhya youth identifies this problem faced by elites when he states that:

I think that the Kalenjin have rubbished the KK thing,¹¹ and they are not into that. They even threatened Ruto and said that they'll not vote for him if he associates with the KK, so Ruto's future will be very narrow if he does that (LSM, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 10 April 2010).

¹¹ He refers to the KKK alliance discussed above. His abbreviation to KK should be understood as a reference to the Kikuyu-Kalenjin dimension of the coalition, the implicit suggestion being that it is this aspect of the relationship which is particularly problematic. This is perhaps due to the fact that the Kikuyu and Kalenjin are largely understood to have an enduring animosity as result of historical injustices over land distribution in the Rift Valley Province, as well as a legacy of vicious ethnic clashes throughout the 1990s.

Similarly, WIL, speaking in 2010 when Ruto's position was being challenged on a number of fronts,¹² indicates the potential for Ruto's loss of supremacy in the approaching referendum:

So this referendum, if Ruto manages... The politicians ally themselves... Like in 2007 Ruto delivered a bloc of votes to Raila. After that it was Kosgey or Ruto, people weren't sure. Now Kosgey is on the yes side and Ruto is on the no, so now we will know who is the spokesman of the Kalenjin. Ruto will weigh himself, if Ruto gets the Kalenjin bloc votes or not (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010).

This dispels the myth that 'the lines of command are unidirectional' and that 'formal avenues for "democratic" critique of those in power by their subordinate clients... are non-existent' (Ovesen 2005: 34). Politicians are themselves constrained by ethnicity and by the expectations of their own community.¹³ Lynch (2008: 556) draws attention to this duality in her study of Kalenjin politics, stating that local level actors can 'apply pressure on, and remove support for leaders, just as the latter realize they can gain easy mileage by supporting popular positions.' The relationship is, then, a reciprocal one (Goldsworthy 1982: 111), in which leaders must justify their status as spokespersons through their actions and their performance on the political stage. Indeed, their role is often to respond to popular sentiments (Lynch 2011: 8) rather than to direct them. It should be noted, in addition, that the constraints of bottom-up expectations are applicable to all levels of political contest, and are perhaps most visible in local level demands for handouts and gifts during political campaigns.¹⁴ Thus,

¹² Ruto's failure to prevent evictions from Mau Forest in late 2009, his alleged involvement in a corruption scandal which led to his temporary suspension from office in February 2010, his subsequent demotion from Agriculture Minister to Minister of Higher Education in April 2010, and his name repeatedly appearing in connection with ICC investigations throughout the year raised some questions over whether he still had the political weight, and the will, to protect his group's interests.

¹³ This does not preclude the possibility of ethnic mobilisation, however. Indeed, a charismatic leader may be able to persuade enough of his community that a particular action is in their best interests, or to effectively deflect blame for unpopular policies. Still, this does not detract from the fact that local level actors have significant agency and ability to affect the political actions of their leaders.

¹⁴ This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter. However, it is interesting to note that a councillor in the Nairobi area suggested that the frequent involvement of politicians in corruption scandals is related to this expectation from their constituents. He states 'Corruption won't end. People must use money in the campaigns, where will I get the money? I must get the money to go and give to my constituents... If you don't meet them

the leader's status as 'king' is not entirely stable; he can be usurped by another influential leader of the same community.

Neither is the spokesman's position wholly uncontested. In the extract from NFF's interview quoted above, he states that the ethnic spokesman is determined by whomever *they* think has the political will. But who is this 'they'? While undoubtedly the 'ethnic group' is inferred, the 'ethnic group' is far from a homogenous entity and local contexts can drastically shape perceptions of, and relations to, political leaders. An interesting example of this is in the case of Kosovo, Mathare. A significant contingent within the Kikuyu dominated area, particularly amongst the youth, pointed to the heavy handed and brutal crackdown by the police on Mungiki in June and July 2007. The targeting of a large majority of youths on suspicion that they were members of Mungiki was seen as being the responsibility of Kibaki, and was commonly cited as evidence of his inability and unwillingness to protect his own community. Several interviewees from the area suggested that it was the memory of this brutality under Kibaki's rule that accounts for the ODM-leanings of a significant contingent of the Kikuyu youth in Kosovo.

The youths of this area... in the leadership of Kibaki, since 2002 Kibaki has harassed them. Many Kikuyu youth have died here, calling them Mungiki. The youth were not happy with Kibaki, so some of us voted for Raila. // There was a time that this area was a Mungiki stronghold, then there was one Thursday in 2006 [*sic*], you woke up in the morning and the GSU were here just targeting boys, saying that all the boys here are Mungiki, so they killed many youth here, so the youth were tired of Kibaki (B, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 12 April 2010).

Kagwanja (2009: 372) similarly argues that the 'high-handed application of the "shoot-to-kill" directive against the youth risked pushing young voters into the arms of the opposition.'

Thus, ethnicity is the reverse of 'unthinking conformity' (Lonsdale 1992: 268) and debates about who best represents the group's interests, and even what constitutes those

you won't get back in the seat. When you meet them you must buy them soda and you must bring them lunch' (LEO, Interview, 18 March 2010). The location of this interview has been omitted to protect anonymity.

interests, are fierce and persistent. The local contours of Kenyan politics are explored in further detail later on in the chapter, but at the macro-level, at the level of the ethnic spokesperson, intra-ethnic divisions and debates are most visible when there are two or more powerful and influential politicians from the same ethnic community vying for the top seat, or where there is no presidential candidate but any number of influential leaders who are well positioned to secure a high-level post in government. The Luhya community, for example, has historically been ‘the most fragmented politically and socially of Kenya’s major communities, with big differences in attitudes and allegiances between the relatively independent sub-groups and no Presidential candidate of their own’ (Throup and Hornsby 1998: 439).¹⁵ Indeed, one interviewee expresses his incredulity at the divisions within the Luhya community and their continued lack of a clearly defined leader:

You know, the Luhya, they don’t have a standing, they don’t know who to support, they’re always mixed up. Their reasoning is low, they’re mixed up. You ask them, “Who are you voting for?” and they don’t know! (TY, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 1 June 2010).

I would suggest that in 2007 the Luhya presidential vote was divided between ODM and PNU, with Mudavadi the champion of Luhya interests in the former, and Awori in the latter.¹⁶ Similarly, the Kikuyu vote was very clearly split between their two presidential candidates both in 1992 with Kibaki and Matiba, and again in 2002, with Kibaki and Uhuru, demonstrating the internal divisions within the group. Intra-community battles for leadership can be fought along a variety of different cleavages, such as region, clan, class, gender, religion, or age. For example, in 1992, Matiba’s popularity amongst the landless and

¹⁵ Indeed, this lack of a presidential candidate renders debates over the identity of the ethnic leader particularly fierce.

¹⁶ MacArthur has suggested that the Luhya community do not ‘automatically’ rally behind Luhya candidates (2008: 230). While I certainly do not wish to suggest that ethnicised political behaviour is ‘automatic’, I find no evidence to suggest that the disposition to vote along ethnic lines has not been as socialised amongst the Luhya community as it has amongst other groups in Kenya. Indeed, most of my Luhya interviewees demonstrate the same ethnicised understanding of politics. Moreover, ODM’s constant invocation of Masinde’s prophecy that the Luhya shall rule only after a Luo has sat in the presidential seat – a point dwelt upon by MacArthur – very pointedly speaks to Luhya ambitions to leadership and ethnicised voting behaviours.

unemployed imposed a class dimension upon the struggles between himself and Kibaki (Kanyinga 1994: 83-85). Sub-regional politics was also an important factor in the 2002 elections as two Kikuyu presidential candidates competed for the support of their ethnic community, and Charity Ngilu's gender was almost certainly capitalised upon in 2007 in an attempt to attract women voters away from fellow Kamba politician, Kalonzo Musyoka.

By way of conclusion, then, it is clear that there is not an unthinking following of ethnic leaders which is the direct result of the latter's charisma and skills of manipulation and mobilisation. Moreover, ethnicity is a powerful force which operates as a bottom-up pressure on elite action. Still, the focus on the personalisation and ethnicisation of Kenyan politics is not wholly unjustified. The widely understood role of 'political elites as ethnic spokesmen' (Atieno-Odhiambo 2002: 232) is deeply apparent in the Kenyan context, pervading political speeches and rhetoric, newspaper articles, opinion pieces, and everyday attitudes, conversations and discourses. Leaders command a great deal of respect, support and trust from their respective communities, and their actions and decisions tend to be perceived as being in the broad interests of the ethnic group. As one Luo youth from Kibera states:

There is a joke in Luo Nyanza that if anything happens an old grandmother will ask, "What has Raila said?" and whatever he has said, then that's it. We've grown like that, even me, even my mum. The other day we were talking about the new constitution and she asked "What's Raila said about it?" I told her, "He said yes", so she said, "Well yes then!" (FOT, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 6 April 2010).

What needs further exploration, however, is how ethnicity operates at the local level of political behaviour and competition. This section has alluded to the pressures that localised expectations can exert upon elites, and has illustrated that there are clear intra-ethnic divisions, contestations and debates, pointing to further complexities and ambiguities. The following sections seek to reflect upon these issues, questioning the rationale behind and complexities of, ethnicised, and indeed non-ethnicised, voting patterns in the local context.

Habitus, Ethnic Voting Patterns, and Social Pressure

In Chapter Three, the notion of ethnicity as a component of the habitus was explored and it was argued that ethnicised perspectives, behaviours and actions can be understood in this context. The rationale behind ethnicised political behaviour is intimately linked to the expectation of benefit, the issue of collective security, as well as to notions of self and group worth. These issues are explored in the following section, but it is important to note here that in this context, ethnicised voting behaviour has become a socialised practice. Ethnicised political behaviour has been constructed through history, over an extended period of time, and has become, for many, ‘just a feeling people have’ (CG, Interview 4B, Mathare, 29 April 2010). It is a practice which is inculcated in the earliest years, and which can either be reinforced or disrupted by everyday life experiences. As one interviewee states, ‘our parents told us, they showed us that our community is the best, it is the one to lead, so the seed was planted by our parents’ (SS, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 12 April 2010), and another explains that ethnic voting has been an element of Kenyan society for a long time, stating:

Me, I say that I am twenty-six years old and since before, this thing was there. I was born and I got it here. Like a Kisii cannot vote for a Kikuyu for example. This tribal war was always there so I just follow it the way it is (MW, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 5 June 2010).

Thus, a number of interviewees suggest that ethnicised voting patterns in Kenya are constructed by an implicit force which exists within subjective consciousness. Nevertheless, as has been argued in earlier chapters, ethnic components of the habitus are continually reproduced, reaffirmed, and perpetuated through lived experiences and the practices of everyday life. As such, the frequent interaction with fellow tribesmen and the everyday practice and performance of ethnic identity, both in its banal and demonstrative forms, contributes to the continued understanding that voting along ethnic lines is the just and moral thing to do:

We Kamba must vote for a Kamba. It is not a pride or a benefit, people just vote their tribe without knowing. Like me, I voted Kalonzo and if you ask me why I have no reason. It is just that when I am in the queue to vote, I was with fellow Kambas, we were talking in our language, like one hundred Kambas going to vote. So when I reach there I won't vote another tribe, no, I'll fear because in that queue I am with all my tribe. They'll all vote my tribe, so why will I vote another? (CS, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 18 May 2010).

Similarly, a Kikuyu interviewee admitted that he regretted voting for Kibaki, and when I asked him what had made him do so, he said, 'I suppose because I saw others supporting their own tribe. At first I wanted the best leader, but in this area all are Kikuyu and my family were pressuring me' (F, Interview, Waithaka, Nairobi, 11 March 2010), highlighting the ways in which everyday ethnicity and the interaction with other members of the ethnic group can reinforce dispositions to act in a particular way. As can be seen from the last two interview quotes, simply being in the presence of co-ethnics who, it is assumed, will almost certainly be voting along ethnic lines, can impose a sense of social pressure; and it can reaffirm practices driven by the ethnic component of the habitus – voting for a fellow tribesman is the accepted and morally correct thing to do.¹⁷ One resident of Kikuyu-dominated Waithaka states: 'There is pressure from other friends and clansmen, they pressure you... I feel that these are my people so I have to do what they are doing' (E, Interview, Waithaka, Nairobi, 8 March 2010). Moreover, perceptions of the divergent and competing interests of different ethnic groups are emphasised through everyday conversations within ethnicised spaces, and the continued vocalisation that people must protect their community by voting ethnically is persuasive:¹⁸

It's like my neighbour starts influencing me saying "She's not good", telling them, "You should vote for PNU because ODM won't help us, all the Luo will take our

¹⁷It should be reiterated here that understanding ethnicised behaviour as a social disposition does not suggest a lack of agency on the part of individuals. People can, and do, resist this narrative of ethnicised voting, and there is a vibrant moral ethnicity which underscores politics at the local level. However, as is discussed later, socio-spatial structures can be remarkably constraining and can limit and suppress alternative perspectives.

¹⁸ Thus, as Bratton and Kimenyi's (2008) study of voting patterns in Kenya has indicated, observations of the apparent solidarity of other communities and the assumption that they will vote exclusively for their own engenders defensive ethnic voting.

houses.” // The landlords are the ones who come and influence us telling us that the Luo will come and take our houses, so I am influenced by that, if I am a tenant. So there was a lot of pressure to vote for PNU, pressure (MR, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 19 April 2010).

Thus, there is a strong disposition to vote in a particular manner, which is reinforced through everyday interactions and the sense of obligation which they invoke. Deviations from ethnicised voting behaviour are met with hostility and punishment by other members of the group.

Clientelism, Patronage and Kenyan politics

It has already been suggested that there is a neo-patrimonial character to Kenyan politics which serves to construct certain expectations amongst local level actors, and which facilitates political mobilisation along ethnic lines by elites. This section explores the nature and operation of patronage networks in Kenya, and suggests that rather than being a simple ethnicised exchange of goods, services and assistance for political support, it is rather the expectation and anticipation of benefit, and the fear of marginalisation and exclusion that underpins voting behaviour.

The ‘our turn to eat’ mentality which dominates political discourse in Kenya has largely been constructed by the uneven investment, development and allocation of resources which characterised the post-independence regimes. Under Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi the ‘top jobs and the lion’s share of government spending’ went to their respective Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities (Branch and Cheeseman 2010: 2) and Kibaki’s government has been similarly accused of ‘defend[ing] this wealth that they got in the wrong way’ (O, Interview, 56, Kawangware, 6 March 2010). As a result there is a pervasive and entrenched understanding that to hold power is to enjoy the spoils of the state:

Kenyans are like that. To them, they see like the way Moi ruled, he ruled for twenty-four years and he gave his people land and opportunities of jobs and many things. So the other tribes want someone of their tribe in power so that even them, they can benefit (KN, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 11 June 2010).

Moreover, given the zero sum nature of Kenyan politics, it is widely understood that to lose an election means to be marginalised and excluded from all benefits for the duration of that government's term. As one interviewee says of the 2007 elections, 'people were divided in ethnic blocs and our ethnic bloc must win. It was life and death, where if you don't win, then no one should win' (CAM, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 19 March 2010). Mueller (2008: 201) has drawn attention to this crucial point, adopting the phrase 'exclusionary ethnicity' to highlight the fact that Kenyan elections are as much about who does *not* get power as they are about who does. However, the exact nature of the benefits of power, as well as the extent to which they trickle down to the local level is an issue of much dispute in the literature and the importance of clientelism and patronage in voting behaviour is increasingly coming under question (for example, Lindberg and Morrison 2005, 2008; Gyimah-Boadi 2007; Erdmann 2007). Consequently, my own interviewees' understanding of the potential benefits that are to be gained from power warrants some discussion here.

There is a widely accepted distinction between clientelism and patronage within the literature which suggests that the former essentially refers to individualised benefits, such as land, office or employment, whilst the latter refers to collective goods, such as roads, schools and hospitals (Erdmann and Engel 2007: 107). Many of my own interviewees, however, do not make such clear distinctions between clientelistic practices and patronage, and the expected benefits frequently straddle the line between the two. Thus, what are essentially individualised benefits granted to members of the elite, such as governmental and ministerial posts, are expected to translate into collective benefits for the group as a whole, and these are,

in turn, expected to be converted into some form of individual advantage. Lindberg and Morrison (2008: 118) have stated that clientelistic practices

include not only paying school fees, electricity, and water bills, and funeral and wedding expenses, distributing cutlasses and other tools for agriculture and “chop” in the form of small sums of money; but also personal assistance in dealing with the authorities, whether they are the police, courts, headmasters, local government officials or ministries.

In Kenya, the direct payment of fees and other forms of tangible face to face benefits are mentioned by only a small number of interviewees,¹⁹ but many perceive that a clientelistic form of personal assistance in times of trouble can be expected from a member of the community holding a position of political power. For example, a young Luhya woman living in Kawangware told me that in 2007 she registered to vote in neighbouring Westlands constituency, rather than her own constituency of Dagoretti in order to vote for a fellow Luhya.²⁰ She explained that if she were to go to the Westlands MP, Fred Gumo, and ‘tell him our problems, for example school fees, then he’ll help me. // so I belong to Westlands’ (YBS, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 3 April 2010). This sentiment was echoed by a middle aged Luhya man from a different area of the slum. He states:

I voted for an MP in Westlands because he is a Luhya like me. If I vote for him and he goes through, I can get some benefits of his rule. Like I have kids going to school and the school fees are high. There is a fund for school kids so I tried to apply for it in

¹⁹ Moreover, such face to face benefits seem to be restricted primarily to campaign periods. Politicians use this more direct form of clientelism in the campaigns ‘paying school fees, or giving money to start a business’ (KAM, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 17 April 2010). Similarly, elites reportedly paid the hospital, or on occasion the funeral, fees of members of their campaign teams who were killed or injured during rallies. However, during an interview with BK – a member of the *Siafu* vigilante group in Gatuikera who regularly act as ‘security’ for Raila on his visits to Kibera – he drew my attention to a fundraising event which was going on in a nearby field. He told me, ‘You know my colleague has died there, so Raila must bring the coffin and must fund the funeral. // He gives us something small because he is in power’ (BK, Interview, Gatuikera, Kibera, 15 November 2009). This clearly demonstrates a more continuous clientelistic relationship. However, there is nothing in my material to suggest that such a relationship is the norm. In fact most interviewees suggest that as soon as the campaigns are over, politicians disappear and are no longer accessible to them.

²⁰ This appears to be quite a common practice in Nairobi, and several interviewees explained that members of the Luo community often vote in Langata constituency, where ‘their man’ is a parliamentary candidate, Luyas register to vote in Westlands, and many Kikuyus living in Kibera took their voting cards in Dagoretti constituency. This practice further highlights the territorialisation of ethnic identity which was discussed in the previous chapters, and draws attention to the entrenchment of ethnicised voting patterns in Kenyan society. Moreover, it is further indicative of a ruralisation of the city, where communities go to their ‘home’ areas to vote.

Dagorette and I didn't get it. It was said that if you're not a Kikuyu you won't get it because the MP here is a Kikuyu, so I went to Westlands to get my help (SSB, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 15 March 2010).

Similarly, a chairman of a youth group in Kibera states, 'If I have a problem there is someone to run away to. If I have someone in government I can walk straight away to their houses' (OBY, Interview, Jamhuri, Nairobi, 16 November 2009).

Moreover, it is largely accepted that if a member of the ethnic group is in the presidential seat he will flood the Cabinet, the Ministries, the parastatals, the army, the police and other institutions with members of his own community, and that this will have a beneficial impact on the everyday lives and opportunities of local level actors.

They give out jobs with tribes. For me, I can go to a Ministry, if I say I am a Kikuyu they will do things very quickly for me. A Luo knows if a Ministry is run by a Luo they will get a job, or another tribe, wherever there is a lot of that tribe (D, Interview, Soweto, Kibera, 5 November 2009).

Thus, what might primarily be a clientelistic arrangement between elites is expected to translate into a collective (and individualised) advantage for other members of the community. Similarly, a Kalenjin youth insists that 'If I was in Moi's era and I have a degree, I know I could have a very good job. If your tribe is in then I'll employ your people, it will reach down to me' (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010). These benefits need not necessarily be tangible, but they can also relate to more intangible assistance in the form of protection and security. In a discussion with a Nubian and a Kikuyu youth, the two agreed that if the police are members of their own community than they are less likely to be harassed by them:

F: They [the Luos] want lakeside people to be top. Like at Kilimani police station, OB's a Luo,²¹ he'll ask "Why have they arrested you?" he will talk to you like you're a human being. If it is a Kikuyu or a Kamba... nothing. He'll kick you.

²¹ OB stands for the station's occurrence book. F here refers to the person in charge of the Occurrence Book on any given day.

W: Even if you're arrested when patrolling and he's a Kikuyu and I'm a Kikuyu, he'll just say, "Go home." It is the problem with Kenya.

(MUS, Group Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 2 January 2010)

Indeed, the hope and expectation that 'once in power everything will be alright' (D, Interview, Soweto, Kibera, 5 November 2009) is of fundamental importance in understanding the violent reaction to the flawed election results in 2007.²²

In addition to these anticipated trickle down benefits which justify my earlier use of the phrase 'clientelistic networks of patronage',²³ more obviously collective group benefits are identified as being important in determining support for and loyalty to an ethnic leader. The construction of better roads, the investment in educational establishments, schools and hospitals, and the wider provision of electricity and water, for example, are all frequently cited as advantages of having one of your own in power. However, a key point is that there need not be a strong redistributive effect from this patronage; what is important is the perception that someone from your own community is more likely to protect your interests than someone of another ethnic group (Erdmann and Engel 2007: 107). Lynch has identified this perception amongst the Kalenjin community where the metaphor that 'although Moi may be bad, he is our rat' was a 'central plank of their [KANU's] presidential campaign' (Lynch 2008: 552). One of my own interviewees echoes this sentiment, stating 'It is better the devil you know than the angel you don't' (C, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 14 December 2009).

However, while a large number of interviewees insist upon the benefits that accompany political power, many, conversely, denied that its effects were felt at the

²² Moreover, this understanding of elections as matters of life or death is linked to issues of structural violence as discussed in the previous chapter. The intense poverty, lack of opportunity, poor healthcare and living conditions, and intimidation by police to which many of my interviewees are subjected in their day to day lives renders understandable the intensity of their hopes in the ethnic leader to rescue them from their current circumstances. Thus, politics in such situations is experienced and fought over perhaps more fiercely than it is amongst those in more affluent settings.

²³ In that the benefit is seldom understood to be the result of a *personalised* interaction between leader and led, but it is understood that patron-client relations at the upper levels are expected to translate into collective and individual benefits at the local level.

grassroots, thus problematising the overly instrumentalist tone of much of the existing literature. One interviewee's statement that 'in reality, it doesn't trickle down' (K, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 4 December 2009) echoes Williams' argument that surprisingly little reaches the lower echelons of society through patronage networks, but rather it 'sticks to a few hands at the top' (Williams 1987: 639). Similarly, an alleged ODM document outlining campaign strategies for the 2007 elections²⁴ cites the 'potential for linkage to under-development in Nyanza' and the fact that 'Kibera in his Langata constituency is the least developed and most volatile area in Nairobi' as weaknesses of, and threats to, Raila's presidential electability (Anon. 2007), indicating that his political position and power has not significantly benefited his community.²⁵ Moreover, the fact that large numbers of Kikuyu have felt little benefit from Kibaki's rule further indicates that the expectation of benefits may far outweigh their reality. However, it is the *anticipation* and the *expectation* that security and improved life conditions are firmly located in the hands of the ethnic leader, and that marginalisation and lack of opportunity will result from the 'wrong' community's electoral triumph that is the crucial point. Lynch (2011: 9) has suggested that it is this exclusionary ethnicity in combination with 'speculative loyalty' – that is, the anticipation of security and assistance – which influences political behaviour. This offers a distinctly different understanding of ethnic politics, opening up the space for exploring localised debates and

²⁴ The document circulated the country via emails and blogs in the final months of the 2007 campaigns, though its origins remain much debated. Some speculate that it was fabricated by PNU members, and others attribute the tactics laid out in it to the ODM political consultant, Dick Morris (Kagwanja 2009: 376). I am cautious in my use of this document, given the questions over its origin. However, the plausibility of its contents to many Kenyans, in addition to the fact that much of it is reinforcing of my own data, allows for its tentative use to help illustrate the nature and operation of Kenyan politics. While a copy was given to me by an interviewee, it can also be accessed at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/961835/ODM-Poll-Strategy>. Hereafter I refer to this document as Anon. (2007).

²⁵ It could be argued that this is due to the fact that he had not held a high enough position by 2007 to have made a significant impact. However, he has previously held cabinet level positions, as Minister of Energy between 2001 and 2002, and as Minister of Roads, Public Works and Housing in Kibaki's administration from 2003-2005 which do not appear to have enabled him to secure significant development projects for his own community. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a large number of non-Luo residents in Kibera lamented the fact that Raila takes localised development projects to his own people in the slum.

interpretations of social and economic justice that are obscured by the broader neo-patrimonial model. These local contours of Kenyan politics are explored in further detail later in the chapter, but the more affective dimensions Lynch alludes to are of importance here. Many interviewees who stressed the lack of any real benefits associated with political power suggest that ethnic voting behaviour is rather more related to issues of pride and superiority:

The way I see, not all Kikuyus are rich, even some are poor. It is just because people want to say “We’re in power.” It is a pride, so they can boast that they’re in power. There is no benefit (PT, Interview, 4B, Mathare 2 May 2010).

Similarly, in an article appearing in *The Sunday Standard*, entitled ‘Nyeri envies neighbours’ state goodies... but residents still proud of “mean” son’, residents of Kibaki’s home district claim that they were disappointed that they had not enjoyed the benefits they had expected from Kibaki’s rule; nevertheless, they would still vote for him in the upcoming election (Mathangani and Njagih, 2007).

You know there is no benefit, it is just pride. They say, “Our person is in power.” In many parts of Kikuyuland there are many poor, they have no money, they have no food, so they were after pride, to be able to say “Our man is in power” (R, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 18 March 2010).

Thus, the ethnic leader can be said to be representative of the group’s status, a symbol of collective prominence (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 42) which, in turn, has an effect on individual feelings of self-worth.

Thus, the neo-patrimonial model is of central importance to an understanding of Kenyan elections, but the influence of patronage networks lies more in the hopes and fears for the future that they evoke than in a direct exchange of benefits for political support. Nevertheless, the expectation of improvements to life conditions from a fellow tribesman holding a position of political influence, and the feelings of superiority and pride which are attached to this power, in addition to the certainty that everyday life will be far harder under

the rule of another community, are deeply entrenched within local level understandings of Kenyan politics.

Individual agency, Moral Ethnicity and Disruptions to the Habitus

Nevertheless, the understanding of ethnicised voting as a socialised disposition, a component of the habitus intimately related to assuring future prosperity and security, does not preclude its disruption, transformation or resistance by local actors. It is evident that many individuals voted against the grain of popular expectation and ethnic meta-narratives, and that localised histories and contexts could shift support away from fellow tribesmen to another politician for a variety of reasons. It has already been noted, for example, that the police action in Mathare in 2007 facilitated the emergence of an anti-Kibaki element within the local Kikuyu community. Similarly, at the individual level, a number of interviewees from ODM-affiliated communities suggested that they had voted for Kibaki as they felt he had improved overall conditions in Kenya since assuming the presidential seat. However, while non-ethnicised voting in the presidential election should not be understated, it is perhaps in the lower levels of political competition, in the parliamentary and civic contests, that it is most acutely observed. A candidate's willingness and capacity to bestow material benefits and assistance upon the local community is often indicated less by his or her ethnic affiliation, and more by other factors such as personal status and relationships within the community. It is also signalled by other identity affiliations such as age or gender, and their capacity to mobilise some form of moral authority amongst local residents. Nevertheless, while ethnicity is of diminished importance, the rationale behind political support remains the same; speculative loyalty underpins voting behaviour even at this local level and support is granted by each individual to the candidate he or she feels will be of greatest assistance in the

future. It is the identification of who is most likely to offer some benefit or gain from their victory that is the issue at hand. This section discusses a few of these in further detail to highlight the wide variety of factors which can be drawn upon, but which each relate to the issue of hopes for future opportunity and prosperity.

Identity factors and personal relationships

In the relative anonymity of macro-level politics and economic development – where personal relationships and face-to-face relations between political and business elites and local level actors are rare – ethnicity is undoubtedly the overarching factor:

In Kenya we have a culture that says to help someone who is closer to you, and someone of your tribe is closer to you. So if I vote my tribe he'll develop my rural area, bring infrastructure there. If I'm looking for employment it is easier for me if my own is at the top (BEAT, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 7 April 2010).

However, at the micro-level, where politics is infused with personal relationships and candidates are understood to have a deeper knowledge of the everyday problems and challenges of people on the ground, other issues come to be of equal, if not greater, importance. It is no longer an anonymous, largely symbolic, interaction between leader and led, but rather a more intimate relationship which is assumed to be, if indeed it is not, based upon a mutual knowledge and recognition of each other. As a result, other factors which mark a candidate's proximity to their constituents can be of importance. Thus, unsurprisingly, a personal friendship or connection with a particular candidate, which is most common at the civic level, can transcend ethnicised voting patterns in this arena. Friends and relations are often employed by political aspirants during the campaign period and it is assumed that should they be successful they will grant employment opportunities and share their new-found wealth with those around them. In this context, then, ethnicity is largely unimportant as benefits are more likely to be received from someone intimately connected through personal

social networks than an anonymous ethnic candidate. Relatedly, those who have managed to obtain employment as leading members of campaign teams often give their vote to their 'employer' in the hopes that upon their election they will either continue with their clientelistic practices of handouts on a regular, if infrequent, basis, or that they will find a job for them somewhere through their position and connections. There are clear hopes of continued support from politicians following the elections, even if it is in the form of infrequent assistance. A chief campaigner for Bishop Margaret Wanjiru in Starehe constituency for example, recalls that following the election the MP would no longer answer his calls, despite having promised him a job upon her election. However, upon accidentally running into the MP in Muthaiga police station, he expected, and indeed received, her assistance in securing the release of some friends who had been arrested (SIM, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 20 April 2010). Similarly, on one occasion when we were walking around Kibera, Nusrah and two of his friends who had been key figures in a civic candidate's campaign team in Kibera came across their councillor. They approached him and he handed them two hundred shillings each. When I asked Nusrah about it he told me that the councillor owed that to them as they had helped him in his campaigns. Furthermore, when they arranged for me to interview the councillor over lunch in a local *hoteli* they attended the interview and very clearly expected, and received, lunch, sodas and miraa at the councillor's expense. Thus, personal relationships, whether formed through pre-existing friendship ties, or through more short-term attachments during political campaigns, can disrupt ethnicised political behaviour; they are expected to result in greater individual benefits than perhaps would ensue from the success of another candidate, be they of the same ethnic community or not.

Where this direct personal relationship is absent, however, other factors become important in identifying commonality, such as age, gender, religion or class, as well as party affiliation and proximity to the ethnic spokesperson. For example, Kavulla (2008: 258-259)

has suggested that given PNU's dominance of the municipal level elections in the area, Margaret Wanjiru's success as the ODM candidate for the parliamentary seat in Starehe constituency necessitates the conclusion that her status within the Pentecostal church, as well as her gender, appealed across ethnic boundaries and party affiliations.²⁶ Similarly, in Dagoretti constituency, Beth Mugo's appeal to older women is reflected upon by a number of interviewees, while her opponent, John Kiarie, a Kikuyu youth affectionately known as KJ, is said to have not only enjoyed the support of a significant contingent of the Luo and Luhya communities in the area because 'the party's ours' (JUL, Interview, 56, Kawangware, 4 March 2010), but also attracted a substantial section of the Kikuyu vote because he was a youth, someone who was seen to understand the problems of the large youth population in the slum. As one interviewee states, 'There was not tribalism in the parliamentary seat. You see KJ is someone young' (JU, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 16 March 2010). KJ, then, was perceived to be capable not only of providing for the Luo and Luhya communities in Kikuyu-dominated Dagoretti constituency by virtue of his membership in Raila Odinga's party, but he was also seen to have the interests of the youth, in general, at heart. Another interviewee draws attention to the intra-ethnic divisions highlighted in the competition between Mugo and KJ, as well as to the supposed youth solidarity across ethnic groups which the latter invoked:

They realised that reaching KJ is easier than reaching an old lady. He can feel what you want and need easier than Mugo. Even if you go there now, to the CDF on a Monday morning, there are many old Kikuyu women there. So with a youth on board it is easier for them to know our problems (A, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 18 January 2010).

Thus, once again it can be argued that this political support and loyalty for both Mugo and KJ was speculative; the latter was identified as someone who could provide assistance and

²⁶Given her affiliation with ODM, Margaret Wanjiru enjoyed the support of much of the Luo community living in Mathare. It is interesting to note that she is often referred to by interviewees simply as 'Bishop' effectively emphasising her religious identity and downplaying her Kikuyu identification, which is explicit in the name Wanjiru.

benefits in the future and would be able to advance the interests of the youth in the area whilst older Kikuyu women felt closer to the former. As Kavulla (2008: 258) states, 'In an election the degree to which one can feel akin to a candidate is, of course, essential.' Nevertheless, and perhaps for obvious reasons, this identification of who constitutes the best prospect for future prosperity, assistance or protection is highly contested within the local context. While both Bishop Wanjiru and KJ received support from significant contingents of their respective Kikuyu communities, at the same time, both they, and their supporters, were demonised by other Kikuyu residents as traitors to the community for their departure from Kibaki's PNU party. This issue is returned to later in the chapter, as it is particularly interesting to pay attention to the socio-spatial dynamics in which such debates occur, or indeed do not.

Individual Qualities, Generosity and Moral Authority

In addition to the advantages expected to result from affinities based upon identity factors and personal relationship ties, candidates must manipulate other aspects of their campaigns in order to manage their individual weaknesses and to translate their individual strengths into moral authority. Symbols, markers and indicators of a candidate's moral authority are of fundamental importance in speculative loyalty and while ethnicity is one very powerful marker, it is certainly not the only one. Indeed, if the identificatory factors discussed above are seen to be indicative of the direction in which benefits and assistance will be bestowed, the issues discussed in this section are the signs of the candidate's capability and willingness to take care of his or her constituents. Uncertainty with regards to an aspirant's ability to take care of others, or to his/her generosity in doing so, can be devastating to his/her campaign. Two young men who vied for civic seats in 2007 in

Nairobi,²⁷ for example, drew attention to their marital status as an important issue in their campaigns. In my interviews with them, both suggested that there is a ‘stereotypic positioning’ that if a candidate ‘is not married then he can’t lead’ (KT, Interview, 6 December 2009). The rationale underpinning this perception is that if he is unable to demonstrate his ability to take care of a wife and of domestic affairs, there is no guarantee that he will be able to look after his community:

I’m not married and the issue of marriage came up, because you know if you’re not married you can’t campaign. So I lied to people, saying that my wife was abroad studying and I even had to call my Mum and tell her to confirm that. You see you must convince people that you can take care of a family first before you can take care of them (SIM, Interview, 18 March 2010).

Thus, marital status acts as a symbol of moral authority.

However, perhaps the most prominent marker of moral authority, of generosity, good nature, and prospects for future assistance, lies in the use of money and other handouts during campaigns. Indeed, this practice of gift-giving, which many would class as bribery, is almost equally as pervasive an issue in Kenyan politics as the ethnic factor, and it operates in a similar manner, both through top-down mobilisation and through bottom-up pressures. One interviewee laughed when I asked if she would vote for someone who had good ideas and policies, but no money, stating, ‘There’s no way that could happen! How can you come and you expect us to give you our votes and there is someone outside pouring money? Automatically he takes it’ (ED, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 7 April 2010). While some scholars have questioned the effectiveness of simple vote-buying in the context of a secret ballot, and Nugent (2007: 254-255) strongly asserts that ‘money cannot literally buy votes under conditions of a secret ballot’, I do not think that it should be discounted entirely. The prominence of the use of agents stationed outside polling centres to distribute cash, which was highlighted by many of my interviewees, points, at the very least, to the belief that direct

²⁷ The exact area of residence of these interviewees is withheld so as to protect anonymity.

bribes are effective. Moreover, a small, but not insignificant, number of interviewees suggested that their vote was influenced by this eleventh-hour handout. CHOC, for example, states, ‘When I was going [to vote] my mind was set that I’d vote for this person, but when I reached there someone bribed me so I changed my mind’ (CHOC, Interview, Waithaka, Nairobi, 8 March 2010). Similarly, a Luo youth who enthused about Raila Odinga and ODM throughout his interview, conceded that he was persuaded to vote, and indeed to mobilise other voters, for a PNU councillor on election-day, stating, ‘I voted for him, we were paid 1500 each to do this and I brought boys so I got 3000. // I voted him as councillor and then the MP and the President for ODM.’ (JAK, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 20 May 2010). It is interesting to note here, however, that money appears to have only been a significant factor at the civic level, recalling my earlier point that in the anonymity of macro-level politics, ethnicity is often seen to be a more accurate indicator of the direction of future benefits. When such interviewees were asked why they did not simply take the money and still vote for their favoured candidate, many expressed their belief that the secrecy of the ballot could not be guaranteed. Others implied a certain moral obligation having already accepted the money. I would suggest that this is entangled in the broader culture of *kitu kidogo* in which gifts are usually given in exchange for some favour or service.²⁸ This supports Collier and Vicente’s (2012: 125) suggestion that vote-buying ‘may nevertheless become effective either if the secrecy of the election is doubted, or if the voter attaches moral value to keeping her word.’

²⁸ This phrase, whilst commonly used to refer to a ‘bribe’ as mentioned in a previous chapter, is also used to cover a wide variety of other ‘greyer’ practices in this moral economy of corruption. Indeed, my interviewees’ expectation of something in return for speaking with me is indicative of this broader culture and is further illustrative of the power and influence of local level expectations. It was impossible for me to effectively mobilise interviewees without offering some small gift in appreciation of their participation. Moreover, local level assistants would often tell potential interviewees that I was a ‘good person’ and that they would receive something small for their time.

However, while not wishing to downplay the simplistic notion of vote-buying entirely, I am in agreement with Nugent (2007) that, on the whole, the function of money and other handouts in political campaigns is primarily a symbolic one which points to the candidate's capability and willingness to distribute wealth and benefits in a direction which is seen to be favourable to each individual. Thus, it is perceived as evidence of the potential for future gains, a tangible basis for speculative loyalty, rather than as a direct bribe. The nature of gifts, handouts and other favours is wide-ranging, including cash, food, drink, clothes, and *lessos*, as well as more clientelistic forms of assistance such as the payment of school fees, funeral costs, rent and other such services. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that the investment in certain development projects increases in the lead-up to the elections. Several interviewees in Mathare, for example, recalled that Maina Kamanda had utilised CDF funds to construct public toilets within Kosovo and had planned to hold a grand opening ceremony at the height of the campaign.²⁹ Nugent (2001: 409) suggests a similar practice was at work in the Ghanaian elections of 2000, where 'the provision of roads and electric poles at election time was calculated to persuade the voters that the NDC was genuinely committed to "development" and had their best interests at heart.' Thus the line between clientelism and vote-buying is quite indistinct and this blurring is related to the fact that all such practices form the basis of speculative loyalties rather than a direct patrimonial exchange. Indeed, 'it is an institutionalized behaviour signifying the willingness to take care of "your people", namely the constituents' (Lindberg 2003: 124).³⁰ This symbolic capital which is attached to

²⁹ However, one of my interviewees who had been an active campaigner for the ODM candidate explained that the ceremony was postponed because he, and other members of his campaign team had, under the cover of darkness, pasted ODM posters all over the walls of the toilets. So, 'when the MP came to open the toilet, he saw them surrounded with posters so he postponed opening the toilet' (SIM, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 15 April 2010).

³⁰ However, while in Ghana Nugent demonstrates that the distribution of cash and handouts is construed in 'overtly moral terms' this does not appear to be the case in Kenya. It is an interesting contradiction and ambiguity that, at the same time as eschewing the corruption of the use of money and handouts both amongst the leaders and amongst the led, the practice is prevalent and expected, in fact it is demanded.

gifts in campaigns is what is of importance, and not the monetary value of the gifts. It is not, then, that ‘bribery may become more costly because allegiance based on identity may increase the “price” of inducing a change of vote’ as Collier and Vicente (2012: 121) postulate, but rather the simple fact that there is a gift of some sort. The following exchange between myself and a Luhya interviewee from Kawangware is indicative of this point:

BEAT: If a politician gave us good money then we voted for him and for those with nothing, they lost. //

S: *So let’s say you, you are a Luhya, say Fred Gumo came here and he gives you 100 to vote for him and then the next day Beth Mugo comes and gives you 1000, would you vote for her?*

BEAT: *[She laughs]* You can’t. Mostly people vote their tribe, even if you could get money from a politician of another tribe, you’ll vote for your tribesman.

(BEAT, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 7 April 2010)

Thus, in this scenario, Gumo has demonstrated his generosity by giving *kitu kidogo*, and a larger amount of money from another candidate is not sufficient to alter the voter’s allegiance to her tribesman. Candidates must translate their particular qualities into moral authority, they must be able to demonstrate their generosity and good nature and their capacity to assist and benefit their constituents in order to be successful on election-day.

This section has argued that factors other than ethnicity can come to be of importance to individual voters, all of which predominantly revolve around this notion of expected gains and benefits. Localised contestations, intra-community divisions and cross-ethnic solidarities could be pointed to as indicative of a vibrant moral ethnicity at work in Kenyan politics. Indeed, some scholars have suggested that these local divisions and debates over who constitutes the best chance at securing individual and collective benefits can offer a ‘more inclusive civic and national consciousness’ (Klopp 2002: 270) and have ‘distinct democratizing effects’ (Orvis 2001: 12). That is, that moral ethnicity has the potential to

‘trump political tribalism’³¹ (Klopp 2002). However, the following section takes a less optimistic view of the contours of local politics, and suggests that rather than operating in opposition to political tribalism, moral ethnicity has actually become conflated with it through the discourse of ethnic territoriality. There is a “dark side” of moral ethnicity’ (Cheeseman 2009: 100), where socio-spatial dynamics and ethnicised expectations reinforce the discourses of political tribalism. Thus, the top-down and bottom-up nature of politics do not necessarily act in opposition to each other, with the latter offering a clear route out of violent ethnic politics, but rather they contain a certain duality which has significant implications for the future of Kenyan democracy.

Socio-spatial dynamics, Ethnic Territoriality and the Local Politics of Kenyan elections

So far it has been argued that while at the macro level of largely anonymous interaction between leaders and led, ethnicity is often perceived to be the most effective way of securing future benefits and assistance. This is further complicated at the lower levels of political competition where localised contexts and individual relationships and experiences can disrupt ethnicised understandings of speculative loyalty. However, individual agency and the internal debates and contestations which operate at the local level are constrained not only by the meta-narrative of ethnic identification, but also, and perhaps more powerfully, by socio-spatial dynamics and the territorialised identities that they produce. Ethnic territoriality has the effect of creating a ‘symbiotic relationship’ between moral ethnicity and political tribalism (Cheeseman 2009: 100), and social pressures, both implicitly felt and explicitly exerted, can make it difficult, if not inherently risky, for individual actors to resist the ethnic and territorialised expectations inherent in Kenyan politics at the grass roots. This section

³¹ The phrase ‘political tribalism’ is employed by Lonsdale as the counter to his notion of ‘moral ethnicity.’ He uses the term to refer to the politicisation of ethnicity by elites.

explores how ethnicised spaces became visibly politicised during the 2007 campaigns and how this served as a constraint upon, and a suppression of, individual agency and intra-ethnic political debates. The persistence of ethnic territoriality in Kenyan society, both in the rural arena, as well as within the various urban centres across the country, has already been discussed at some length. It has been argued that discourses of territorial ownership engender a native/immigrant, host/guest dichotomy in which minority groups are subject to a reduced citizenship status and are expected to conform to the political wishes of the majority or native community. However, this expectation of conformity is simultaneously felt by, and imposed upon, individuals within the host community who might consider, vocalise or display their preference for another candidate or party, and it is this intra-community policing and the localised suppression of internal debate which is explored here.

In moments of transition or tension, ethnicised spaces become highly politicised, the borders between ‘our’ area and ‘their’ area become increasingly distinct and reified, and the boundaries of political acceptability are visibly enacted. In the lead-up to the 2007 elections, a number of interviewees recall that the words ODM and PNU were scrawled onto the walls and inscribed on the iron sheet houses of their settlements, particularly on the structures near to the imagined borders of the territory. One interviewee, for example, recalls that after fighting broke out between PNU and ODM supporters during a rally in the Ronda area of Nakuru, it was decided by local residents that PNU should no longer be allowed to campaign within the territory:

So then we said that as from today, no PNU truck can pass there, they’ll just do their campaign in their own territory and we will do our campaign in our area. That is when we wrote “ODM zone” in our area, all over, and they wrote “PNU zone” on their territories. // We were writing it with paint on the walls, on the markets, the kiosks, on the roads and on the gutters in the road (CH, Interview, Ronda, Nakuru, 12 June 2010).

Moreover, the extensive use of campaign posters erected in these neighbourhoods, and the refusal to allow opposition posters to be put up had the similar effect of visibly demonstrating the political identity of the territory and ownership of the space:

Mostly, say in Pondamali, you'll get ODM posters everywhere and maybe they give you PNU posters to put in the area, there is nowhere you can put it. Maybe just in your house, because on the highway, on the electricity poles from top to bottom it is ODM, ODM, so there is nowhere to put your PNU posters (HIB, Interview, Pondamali, Nakuru, 23 June 2010).

The political leanings of ethnicised spaces were also vocally articulated, as opposition campaigners were prevented, often violently, from holding rallies in these territories and local residents were expected to voice their support for the accepted party only. As one interviewee states, referring to the ODM zone of 4B, Mathare, 'It was difficult for PNU to talk about PNU, the people living in the area wouldn't allow that' (DO, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 11 May 2010). This suffocating political environment, with its expectations of absolute conformity, effectively suppressed open political debate within the area and engendered a strong notion that 'you have to go with the chorus of the area' (GB, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 20 June 2010) amongst both host and guest communities alike. While this visible and vocal politicisation of space can be markedly coercive in and of itself, it is the active policing of these boundaries and the disciplining of deviant behaviour, both within and between communities, which is perhaps the most powerful constraint upon individual agency.

It has already been noted that during the 2007 campaigns the reduced citizenship status imposed upon minorities was violently enforced as they were harassed, intimidated, attacked, and sometimes even killed for expressing their support of opposition parties.³² The disciplining of political behaviour, however, also operates to constrain individual choice,

³² See Jenkins (2012: 13-14) for examples of the ways in which minorities were violently disciplined during the campaigns. While in this section I remain focused upon how socio-spatial dynamics influence intra-ethnic politics, it should be noted that verbal abuse and vicious attacks upon ethnic minorities are very important factors in the creation of an intimidating and repressive intra-communal political atmosphere and the containment of alternative political preferences within the ethnic community.

freedom and agency *within* the local ethnic community. In a society in which the ethnic spokesperson is understood to be the primary protector and defender of collective benefits and security, to vote against him is perceived as disloyalty and a betrayal of the entire ethnic group: 'If you vote for another tribe it's like you're selling your tribe' (NJ, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 12 April 2010). Members of the community who are vocal in their support of other candidates are labelled as traitors and are subjected to insults and abuse by their fellow tribesmen. These intimidating behaviours thus reinforce the sense of obligation and pressure to vote the 'right' way, effectively reducing the space for contestation and debate. In ethnicised spaces the abuse of known opposition supporters became an everyday occurrence and they were subjected to insults and verbal attacks whenever they walked through the neighbourhood. They 'would be teased and booed' (SS, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 12 April 2010) and 'there was that hate, like if an ODM person passed near they'd hurl insults at them and abuse them' (BTS, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 14 April 2010). One interviewee explains that he received such continued and extensive threats, warnings and abuse from the elders in his neighbourhood that 'it reached a time I couldn't even pass where they are' (J, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 2 May 2010). Moreover, the potential repercussions of vocal support of an unfavourable candidate or party were not limited to verbal attack. Interviewees also reported being ostracised by other members of their community:

If you were ODM but you were campaigning for PNU, when they see you with ODM you'll be in shit. If you came here, they won't sit with you and they'll get mad with you (EL, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 4 May 2010).

Similarly the businesses of opposition supporter were often shunned by the community. One interviewee recalls that 'a friend here lost his business because he was vocal that he was supporting ODM, so people didn't take that well and they stopped buying from him.' (J, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 19 April 2010). In some cases prominent opposition supporters from within the ethnic community were threatened with, if not actually subjected to, violent

disciplining of their perceived transgressions. A number of interviewees in Kosovo, Mathare told the story of a young Kikuyu woman by the name Njeri, who was a prominent supporter of Margaret Wanjiru's ODM campaign in Starehe constituency. Interviewees recalled that her vocal support of ODM attracted much negative attention in the area and that one day during the campaigns some local youths went to her house with the intention of burning it to the ground.³³ Similarly, a Luo youth in Pondamali explains the potential for violent reprisals for the support of the wrong candidate or party:

But the people on the ground, in their mind and hearts they'll call me a traitor, it will reach an extent that as I go to campaign some will maybe break my house, some may mug me and even they can chase me from the plot, or I can be beaten (HR, Interview, Pondamali, Nakuru, 26 June 2010).

In a similar way individuals who were minorities within a particular territory and had conformed to the political expectations of their area, were consequently subject to external abuse from their own community. One Kikuyu youth, who had been resident in Luo-dominated Gatuikera for his entire life and who was an avid supporter of ODM states:

That made my fellow tribesmen to hate me. They had that grudge, they abused me telling me that I am not thinking. But I stood and told them that according to me I wanted the change that ODM were promising. //Most of them were insulting me, telling me my head is... maybe I've gone mad, gone crazy. Some were telling me I was thinking in a negative way, other Kikuyu. Since that day most of them hate me (KM, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 5 December 2009).

KM indicates that he was able to ignore the accusations, insults and abuse he received from members of his own community and continued with his support of ODM throughout the campaigns. However, I would suggest that KM's ability to remain vocal in his opposition to ethnic expectations is related to his residency in an ODM zone where there are few other members of his ethnic group with whom he must interact in everyday life. For those who live in areas dominated by their own group the frequency, intensity, and indeed violent potential,

³³ The reasons why they did not succeed in burning her house are disputed amongst interviewees. Some suggest that the women and mothers in the area appealed to the youths to desist, while others suggest it was the elders or other male youths.

of abuse was remarkably effective at suppressing their support, or at very least their *open* and *vocal* support, of opposition candidates. Thus, as a Kikuyu youth from Kibera exclaimed in frustration, ‘In a democracy you vote for who you want, but that is not what is happening here’ (D, Interview, Soweto, Kibera, 5 November 2009).

While this policing of behaviour certainly had an impact on a significant number of individuals who indicated that ‘I’m voting this tribe // but it is not my choice of candidate’ (J, Interview, Kobiwo, Kawangware, 1 March 2010), it did not *necessarily* prevent individuals voting however they wished, even in ethnicised spaces. Many interviewees suggested that while these socio-spatial dynamics often silenced their outward expression of political support, they had still voted their conscience, keeping their support of the opposition a secret from their friends, relatives and neighbours for fear of reprisal.³⁴

Me, personally, according to all the presidents that we have had in Kenya, Kibaki has done something in our nation, he has achieved something which everyone can see. He’s a good guy, but the advisers leading him are bad. I can’t say that where the Luo are though, I can be killed or beaten because people are after their tribe, it is stronger than everything else (HR, Interview, Pondamali, Nakuru, 26 June 2010).

Thus, whilst for many people the local politics of Kenyan elections served to constrain their individual agency and choice of candidate, it was arguably most effective in its suppression of *open* political debate, which was virtually non-existent in ethnicised spaces:

When it reached campaigning it is difficult to find another tribe in this area, there is no freedom in this area. They want that it is a Luo, let him be the councillor, they won’t allow another tribe’ (NO, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 12 December 2009).

Conversely, in ethnically mixed spaces these dynamics do not appear to have been nearly as predominant. The territory is not seen as belonging to any particular group, and as such there is little risk of marginalisation and exclusion on ethnic grounds from local leaders. Debate within these areas is open and voting is largely down to individual choice:

³⁴ Indeed, this overestimation of ethnic conformity further fuelled the absolute certainty that the elections had been rigged in many places.

There were ODM and PNU supporters, the rallies were held here, but there was no hatred, you have a right to campaign here, or to campaign anywhere. // The groups from 4A were ODM supporters and Kosovo is PNU, but here we're neutral, you can just vote for who you want, no group would come and force you to vote for them (SS, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare 18 May 2010).

This is not to say that political debate was entirely non-conflictual at this level, nor that ethnicity becomes irrelevant in these areas. Indeed, it was not uncommon for political debates to result in arguments, and occasionally fights. However, the environment is not so tightly controlled by local residents, stake holders, and gangs.³⁵ It is perhaps in these de-territorialised areas that the emancipatory potential of moral ethnicity resides. The absence of ethnic territoriality ensures that there is limited conflation of moral ethnicity and political tribalism and there is a greater freedom of political debate and choice.

Violent Politics and Kenyan Campaigns

This final section moves away slightly from the issues directly related to ethnicised and non-ethnicised voting patterns, and the sometimes-violent localised suppression of intra-community debate, in order to explore the role of ethnic militias and vigilante groups and the top-down employment of violent tactics in Kenyan politics. As has been pointed out in Chapter One, there is a substantial body of literature which demonstrates that the pre-electoral instrumentalisation of disorder by Kenyan elites through the use of ethnic vigilante groups has been a prominent feature of elections since the transition to multiparty politics in 1992. From as early as October 1991 incidents of ethnic violence erupted across the country,

³⁵ The leaders of intra-community policing vary quite significantly from place to place. Some suggested that local youths who were employed as campaigners were the key perpetrators, while others suggested that it was village elders, and others simply pointed to residents of the area in general. Others drew attention to what I have termed 'stakeholders' – by this I refer largely to local businessmen and landlords who have more to lose from an unfavourable candidate's election. For example, in Kawangware, where the majority of landlords are Kikuyu, several candidates' promises of reducing or eradicating rent in the slum would have drastically affected their individual security and wealth. It appears that they took on an active role in persuading and coercing local residents to toe the ethnic line. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that they employed members of Mungiki in the area to coerce local residents and to intimidate, and even evict, ethnic minorities from the area.

beginning with clashes over land at Meteitei farm in Nandi district and soon spreading across Rift Valley, Western and other parts of Kenya.³⁶ In the Rift Valley these attacks were orchestrated and funded by prominent politicians and carried out by trained militias of Kalenjin warriors in ‘a strategy adopted to intimidate and terrorise the ethnic groups that seem to be in support of multiparty democracy’ (NCCCK 1992: 3). Indeed, the Parliamentary Select Committee report into the clashes – commonly referred to as the Kiliku report – documents that members of these militias were paid between 1,000 and 2,000 Kenyan shillings for killing a person and 10,000 shillings for burning a permanent house (Republic of Kenya 1992: 75). Similarly a document released by the National Council of Churches of Kenya points to elite involvement by identifying the vehicles involved in transporting these Kalenjin warriors as belonging to prominent MPs (NCCCK 1992: 17). The 1997 elections, and to a lesser extent the 2002 campaigns, similarly indicate that candidate militias under names such as *Jeshi la Mzee*, *Jeshi la Embakasi*, *Jeshi la King’ole*, *Baghdad Boys* and *Chinkororo*, were utilised by politicians to intimidate opponents and to disrupt campaign rallies.³⁷ Violence has certainly become an integral part of Kenyan politics, and many scholars have pointed out that it has become ‘commonplace for politicians to have their own (violent) gangs of supporters, generally of the same ethnic group’ (de Smedt 2009: 595). A number of analyses of the 2007-2008 crisis allude to the continued prominence of these ethnically based political goon squads and imply that they play a similar role to those of the early 1990s. Kamungi (2009: 352), for example, writes:

Ethnic militias such as the Kalenjin Boys and the 12 Disciples still exist, retained through monetary and employment incentives to perpetrate violence or mobilise support for party positions on national issues such as the constitution.

³⁶ For a detailed chronology of the spread of violence, see NCCCK (1992) and for more comprehensive accounts and analysis, see Human Rights Watch (1993), Republic of Kenya (1992), Throup and Hornsby (1998) and Klopp (2001).

³⁷ See Anderson (2002: 547-552) for an account of the various vigilante groups which emerged in the 1990s.

This section explores these so-called ‘ethnic militias’ in the context of the 2007 campaigns and suggests that while politicians certainly made use of hired youths to disrupt the electoral process and to intimidate opponents, these groups were often far less cohesive, bounded and organised than their predecessors, and their characterisation as predominantly mono-ethnic does not appear to be entirely accurate in the 2007 context. While in the 1990s large-scale violence primarily took place in the pre-electoral environment and was designed to intimidate, displace and otherwise prevent opposition supporters from voting, in 2007 the most significant violence took place *after* the election, and consequently was markedly different in nature. Indeed, the various collections of youths who had participated heavily in the campaign activities of a particular candidate, who were effectively their ‘militias’, did not necessarily participate on the same side during the post-election violence. One Kikuyu interviewee, for example, explains that he was one of ‘Ruto’s boys’ during the campaigns, part of a group of youths from all different communities who would meet, armed with *rungus*, and be transported to opposition rallies in order to create chaos. However, once the violence started, ‘I came back here, because I am a Kikuyu. I put the party aside now, I come as a Kikuyu’ (AV, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 4 February 2010). It is helpful, then, to make a clear distinction between the groups of youths attached to politicians during the campaigning period, and the mobilisation of more organised ethnicised elements – such as Kalenjin warriors and Mungiki – in the post-election environment. Thus, this section focuses solely upon the relationship between, and the activities of, political leaders and their associated youth³⁸ in the campaigning period of the 2007 elections.

Candidates for office, whether at the civic, parliamentary or presidential level, all employ groups of youth to assist them in their campaigns and in 2007, while some politicians

³⁸ While this term is used throughout the thesis to refer to young men between the ages of 18 and 35, it should not be inferred that women are excluded from these campaign teams.

apparently made use of established and semi-cohesive groups, such as *Mungiki*, *Siafu* and perhaps *Jeshi la Mzee*,³⁹ this was not the norm, at least not at the level of local politics. Many interviewees who took an active part in the campaign period and who were, for all intents and purposes, on the payroll of various politicians, indicate a more organic and fluid recruitment and participation process, suggesting that these groups were rarely pre-established, organised vigilante gangs. Rather, they were amorphous and unstructured assortments of youth, largely emerging out of the various street-corner organisations and friendship groups of urban micro-territories. Some of these groups were approached by politicians, and others actively sought out candidates to whom they could offer themselves as campaigners. SIM, for example explains that the politicians ‘came to our base where we youth used to gather and we talked and we decided to work with them’ (SIM, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 15 April 2010). Similarly, AR recalls that ‘when the campaigns started, we formed groups and the guys vying for the seats looked for groups like us and we were paid to campaign for a certain candidate’ (AR, Interview, Kobiwo, Kawangware, 1 March 2010).

While these groups were certainly engaged in violent activities during the campaigns, this was only one aspect of their involvement, and their role has metamorphosed quite significantly from the primarily violent intimidatory tactics of the 1990s militias. Indeed, the responsibilities and activities of youth groups in the 2007 campaigns were many and varied. At times they assumed the role of enthusiastic, yet largely benevolent cheerleaders; at other times they adopted more ‘traditionally’ malevolent and violent tactics and were used to instil

³⁹ There is strong evidence to suggest that elements of *Mungiki* were involved in Dagoretti MP Beth Mugo’s campaign, and that Raila drew assistance from the *Siafu* vigilante group in Kibera, and there is some limited indication that Fred Gumo reactivated the Luhya group called *Jeshi la Mzee*. However, even with these contingents, which could perhaps be understood as ‘ethnic militias’, other people who are not members of these groups also played an active part in the campaign teams. Indeed, FZ, a Nubian youth from Kibera told me that the councillor for whom he and three of his friends – each from different ethnic communities – were campaigning ‘took us up to the MP, to Beth Mugo, and we became her soldiers’ (FZ, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 3 August 2010). Thus, even those candidates who may have utilised more established vigilante groups akin to the political ‘armies’ of the 1990s, did not turn to them exclusively.

fear and to intimidate political opponents and their supporters. Youths were often employed to follow candidates around as they campaigned, to attend their rallies, singing and cheering their names. Indeed, one civic candidate indicates that he employed some youth solely for the purpose of ‘composing songs, because people must sing’ (LEO, Interview, 18 March 2010) and another interviewee describes his involvement in the campaigns as being ‘just like celebrating with the councillors, shouting with them’ (EL, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 4 May 2010).⁴⁰ I observed the verve, excitement and enthusiasm with which this role is enacted during a ‘YES vote’ campaign rally for the constitutional referendum which took place in Nairobi on 1 August 2010. As I crossed Uhuru Park, I heard lots of screaming and shouting, and the distinctive noise of numerous plastic *vuvuzelas*. When I reached Uhuru highway and was about to cross over heading towards Nairobi’s Central business district I saw two trucks packed full of campaigners donning the green t-shirts and hats of the Yes campaign, and others who had painted their bodies and faces green and were waving small green flags pronouncing “YES.” They were standing in the back of an open truck, hanging off the sides and perched on top of the roof. Dozens of others were running and dancing alongside as the vehicles slowly made their way towards the entrance of Uhuru Park ready for the rally. Everyone was singing, chanting and shouting. The pomp and spectacle of the campaign certainly generated a sense of hype and excitement as I and other passers-by stopped to watch. Gachigua (2008: 12) suggests that such hype and glitz was typical during the 2007 campaigns and was designed to attract crowds and media attention and Haugerud (1995: 1) has similarly argued that ‘exuberant showmanship is one enduring face of Kenyan political life.’ It is this creation of spectacle that forms an important role of these youth groups. These campaign teams also often take on the task of distributing handouts, such as cash, t-shirts,

⁴⁰ EL notes however, that this group was also simultaneously acting as their candidate’s security detail, and were expected to protect him should they be attacked by an opposing group.

lessos and food, on behalf of the politicians. SIM, for example, a key campaigner for Margaret Wanjiru recalls that ‘one day the Bishop called us and told us that there is some flour to be distributed to people, so we went to Huruma to distribute it’ (SIM, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 15 April 2010). They are also paid to put up posters of their candidate and to generally praise their name to all who will listen. Thus, these are not simply criminalistic and violent goon squads used to intimidate people and to whip up tension; they are employed to create the pomp and spectacle of a successful campaign.

However, it would be misleading to suggest that intimidation and violence does not constitute an important dimension of their activities. At times violent clashes are unintentional, such as when residents of an ethnicised space, or another candidate’s supporters, catch a group removing the ‘preferred’ or ‘acceptable’ candidate’s posters from an area. Nevertheless, deliberate and strategic violence is also an integral part of each group’s *modus operandi* and they are funded to attend and disrupt the rallies of their opponents, to prevent opposition candidates campaigning in their strongholds, and generally to disturb the campaign and electoral process. One young woman who was involved in the campaigns in Dagoretti states, ‘We were taken to rallies of our opponents to spoil them. It was fun’ (BB, Interview, Kobiwo, Kawangware, 3 March 2010), and a youth campaigning for Stanley Livondo – the PNU parliamentary candidate in Kibera – describes a day in which they tried to campaign in Luo-dominated Sarangombe Ward. He states:

They⁴¹ saw us heading to Sarangombe, immediately, in a personal car in Kamkunji, they were dishing out 500 shillings saying “Livondo’s people are coming, kill them! The constitution, they felt that we were a threat because Raila had to win the MP seat.⁴² So they dished out money. The intention was to kill (AT, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 21 December 2009).

⁴¹ He seems unclear as to who constitutes this ‘they.’ He initially suggests that it was ‘400 hired hooligans’, but later he suggests that it was members of the *Siafu* alone – most likely it was a mixture of both.

⁴² The constitution stipulates that candidates must win their parliamentary seat to be eligible for Presidential election.

It is not uncommon for members of these campaign groups to be at the centre of suppressing political debate within ethnicised territories, but it should not be assumed that *all* disciplining of deviant political behaviour is carried out by paid youths, nor indeed that all intimidation and abuse of opposition supporters is directed from above. These groups often act independently of elite provocation in policing borders, and they frequently operate alongside more organic forms of intimidation and abuse by local residents who are not active campaigners, as described in the previous section. Thus, top-down mobilisation and bottom-up practices are often mutually reinforcing and should be explored together.

At the most extreme end of the scale of violent tactics undertaken by these group are premeditated and specifically targeted attacks upon opposition candidates or their supporters. Some interviewees indicated that they had been directly recruited to destroy property or to kill opposing candidates. One interviewee recalls, ‘I was approached by someone sent by Raila to organise some boys to burn the CitiHoppa buses because they are owned by Kikuyu. // We were told, “We’ll give you 5,000 now and 5,000 after the job is done”’ (JUL, Interview, 56, Kawangware, 4 March 2010). Similarly FZ remembers an exchange between himself, two of his friends, and a councillor for whom they were working at the time:

Our councillor told us // that in your plot, if there are some dirty things like this mud here, you must remove it so that here is clean. It won’t bring a good picture to your compound. I asked him, “What do you mean?” and he said, “In our compound there are dirty leaves and we must remove them and throw it away,” I didn’t understand what was that dirty leaf, without knowing that he meant his opponent who was very strong... to remove him. There is when we knew that he meant V, to remove him is to kill him. // He gave us money and we planned (FZ, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 3 August 2010).

FZ goes on to explain that he and his friends saw an opportunity here to extort money from both councillors, and having been paid for the job by the first, they decided, ‘we go to V and we tell him, “they’ve sent us to come and kill you with this money. We’ll do what our boss

has sent us to do” so that V could worry and he could give us more money.’ Having done this, they arranged with V to make it seem as if he had been attacked:

We arranged a deal for the next day, the group of three of us and V. “The day you are supposed to kill me you just come” and we came and we broke his windscreen and we broke his car and we put dents in his car, and he had some bruises // and that incident was in the media, that the councillor was going to be killed by a group of gangsters. We told [our] councillor “We tried but there were some Flying Squad in the area and they interrupted us” so Councillor thought we had done the mission.

This story raises attention to the ways in which youths use politicians during the campaigns. Often the emphasis is placed upon the manipulation of unemployed youths by political elites, and while I certainly do not wish to downplay the importance of this dimension, it should also be noted that these youths also use and manipulate politicians. In fact, many interviewees who were involved in the campaigns suggested that they were not attached to one candidate alone, but joined in with other groups in an effort to capitalise upon the financial rewards, and many explained that the campaigns were ‘like a job.’ A Kalenjin youth living in Kaptembwa in Nakuru, for example, explains that he initially campaigned for ODM, but after speaking with his PNU friends he discovered that they were being paid 200 shillings more, ‘So that tempts you to cross the border to campaign with them. We campaigned in their area and they came to our area too’ (KV, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 16 June 2010). Thus, the ethnic component of the 1990s militias is complicated by these fluid and unbounded groups and often members of supposedly ‘rival’ ethnic communities campaigned together. Even Kikuyu youths in the Rift Valley joined in with campaigns for William Ruto:

That time we were Ruto’s boys in the area, working for him in the campaigns. // We follow where there is money and here no one has money like Ruto. So we used to go where there is money, but we know where we belong (AV, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 4 February 2010).

Moreover, members of opposing campaign groups could be persuaded to work together temporarily in a recognised opportunism. FZ, given the difficult task of putting up PNU

posters in the Luo stronghold of Gatuikera, approached three ‘kingpins’⁴³ in the area and told them, ‘We’re not after politics, we are after our stomachs, and if our stomachs cry hunger then we can do anything. We want to put up these posters with you and we will give you 5000 each’ (FZ, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 3 August 2010).

Given the intolerance for transgressions from the expected ethnicised support, however, youths campaigning for ‘unacceptable’ candidates had to negotiate and manage their situation very carefully. While some did this by convincing their fellow tribesmen that they were simply following the money and that their heart – and more importantly their vote – lay with the community, most only participated in campaigns for the ‘wrong’ community outside of their own neighbourhoods, keeping their involvement with the opposition a secret. One Luo interviewee who was campaigning for a PNU civic candidate in a neighbouring ward explained that his Luo friends in 4B, Mathare, ‘didn’t know that I was campaigning for PNU, if they’d have known then it would have been bad’ (JAK, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 20 May 2010) and another interviewee echoes this sentiment stating that if members of his community had known that he was campaigning for PNU, ‘I wouldn’t have been safe’ (JG, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 3 June 2010).

Thus, to understand these groups as predominantly mono-ethnic militias is deeply misleading and it masks the opportunistic, trans-ethnic cooperation which often takes place at the local level. Nevertheless while there is perhaps more inter-ethnic cooperation amongst youths in their pursuit of financial gain during political campaigns it remains an inherently risky and dangerous activity in the context of ethnic territoriality and the expectation of political conformity.

⁴³ Who were heavily involved in the campaigns for Raila Odinga and ODM.

Conclusion

Existing analyses of African politics, with their emphasis on the centrality of ethnically structured patronage networks and influential ethnic leaders, have much to offer to an understanding of the 2007 elections in Kenya and their violent aftermath. While the literature has a tendency to overstate the materiality of ethnic politics, it is abundantly clear that Kenyans expect better opportunities and life chances from a member of their own community being in power – or at the very least allied with those in power – and that they anticipate almost certain marginalisation and subordination at the hands of others. Thus speculative loyalty and exclusionary politics, that is hopes and fears for the future, are central to determining the direction of political support and raising the stakes of elections. In the relative anonymity of macro-level national political competition, ethnicity is consistently perceived to be the safest means through which to safeguard future prosperity, and any deviation from this is regarded as potentially dangerous. As one Kalenjin interviewee states, ‘People attach Ruto to saving the community, but if I knew that I would be protected by another person of another tribe then I’ll not vote my tribe’ (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010). However, the view from below depicts a far messier and more complex scenario.

While at the higher levels of political competition ethnic leaders enjoy considerable degrees of loyalty, it is not an unthinking, unwavering and unquestioning support, and their continued predominance is far from guaranteed. Ethnic ‘kings’ are not immune from shifting loyalties and challenges to their position, and they must carefully manage perceptions of their value to the community as a whole, especially if there are other influential and powerful politicians from the same community lurking in the shadows. Such intra-ethnic competition at the highest echelons can easily divide the ethnic community along another cleavage line, such as regional or clan affiliation. Nevertheless, it is largely assumed and expected that

political support will remain ethnically directed at the level of high politics, and this disposition to vote along ethnic lines is embedded in the habitus. However, at the lower levels of political competition ethnicity can become far less important and fierce intra-community debates can emerge amongst local level actors over which candidate is best able to improve their everyday circumstances. Local histories, personal relationships, and other identificatory factors such as age, gender, class, clan, party affiliation and religion come into play. Politicians at this level must work extremely hard in order to translate their peculiar attributes into moral authority, that is to say, they must convince local communities that they are both more willing and better able to protect and provide for them than the other candidates. Thus local level political discussions, conversations, and debates continuously produce, reproduce, challenge and transform perceptions of where speculative loyalty is best invested, and the ethnic dimension can become more or less important depending upon the immediate context.

However, while such discussions may thrive in ethnically mixed territories – or when there are two candidates from the same community – and people are relatively free to vocalise their support for whomever they wish, there is far less space for debate in ethnicised neighbourhoods. Fears of losing control of, and supremacy in, the area underscore the insistence that residents support candidates from their own community, and the multi-vocality of ethnic identity and political debate is silenced. Deviations from the expected ethnicised political behaviours are policed and disciplined, often violently, and in these areas the line between political tribalism and moral ethnicity becomes increasingly blurred. Thus, violent ethnic politics is not wholly, or even primarily, directed and instigated by elites and organised vigilante groups in the political campaigns of contemporary Kenya. Rather, the diffusion of violence has extended into the very contours of localised relations and interactions, as embedded notions of ethnic territoriality serve to stifle political debate and constrain individual agency.

Chapter Six:

From Banality to Bloodshed: Triggers and Transitions

Introduction

On 14 October 2002, at a large opposition rally in Uhuru Park, Nairobi, Raila Odinga famously declared ‘*Kibaki Tosha!*’¹ marking the beginning of Kibaki’s ascendancy to the presidency as the leader of the NARC coalition. The raucous crowd burst into song, dancing along to the refrain ‘*Yote yawezekana bila Moi.*’² However, within a few years, stark political divisions were beginning to emerge and by the time the constitution was put to a referendum in 2005 the Kikuyu were widely perceived to be isolated, standing alone on the ‘wrong’ side of the political divide. This polarisation only continued and intensified leading into the election year as the rhetoric of ‘forty-one-against-one’ pervaded the country and framed the political setting. This chapter offers an account of the transformation from the seemingly unified environment of 2002 to the deep polarisation of 2007, and explores the transition from the banal ethnicity and everyday conflict which characterise Kenyan society to the widespread bloodshed of the post-election violence. I begin by examining the increasing polarisation which marked Kibaki’s first term, suggesting that ethnicised discourses of betrayal were constructed and drawn upon, both by elites and local level actors, to solidify new and emerging political alliances. I go on to offer a detailed exploration of the campaign period, illustrating how hate speech, negative ethnicity, and incitement were perpetuated at

¹ ‘Kibaki is enough’, meaning that Kibaki is the chosen presidential candidate for the NARC coalition, and he is enough to oust Moi from power. Raila’s endorsement of Kibaki is widely credited as being crucial to mobilising and uniting the people behind the NARC coalition. It is also interesting to note that at the end of 2011, key figures in government were purportedly pressuring Kibaki to make a similar endorsement of Raila for the upcoming election and to declare “Raila Tosha.” (Otieno, 2012).

² Everything is possible without Moi.

all levels of social agency, and should be understood, in part, as an intensification of the everyday prejudice which pervades society. The campaigns triggered a movement along the continuum of ethnic conflict and previously unnoticed, banal, or policed expressions of prejudice and resentment became increasingly visible, sinister, and unconstrained. I suggest that where the distinctions between bottom-up everyday animosity, and top-down incendiary hate speech are blurred and indistinguishable, the receptivity of incitement to ethnic violence finds its logic. The chapter concludes by examining the specificities of the 2007 elections, the counting process and the announcement, drawing attention to how the particular sequence of events served to heighten feelings of hope and excitement, and intensified the subsequent disappointment, anger and sense of injustice with the flawed elections. The high stakes and deep emotions attached to the 2007 elections, and the pervasive belief that the democratic process had been corrupted, served as the key trigger to the violent protests of the immediate aftermath.³

Yote yawezekana bila Moi? High hopes and deep disappointments of the Kibaki regime

The intense disaffection with the authoritarian, corrupt and tribalistic KANU regime was palpable by 2002 and ‘NARC’s campaign tapped directly into most Kenyans’ deep desire for change’ (Wolf et al. 2004: 4). The coalition’s electoral victory marked the apex of Kenyan optimism and ‘heralded expectations that a new political era of democracy had dawned in Kenya’ (Nasong’o and Murunga, 2007: 9). However, these expectations were soon met with disillusionment and disappointment. Whilst in 2003, 79 per cent of Kenyans

³ While I suggest that the elections acted as a trigger, and that the violence on 30 December can be largely understood as a spontaneous eruption of protest, this does not describe or explain the violence dynamic as a whole. There is strong evidence to suggest that some of the violence was pre-planned and highly organised, and there are deeper issues at stake than the flawed elections. These are explored in Chapter Seven.

expressed satisfaction with ‘the way democracy works in Kenya’, this figure plummeted to just 53 per cent over the next two years (Logan, Wolf and Sentamu, 2007: iv) as the Kibaki administration failed to deliver on many of its campaign promises, and was perceived to be returning to the corruption and tribalism of the past. An article in the *Daily Nation* in February 2005 is indicative of this growing disillusionment:

In 2002, I thought I had President Mwai Kibaki figured out. He was the ideal candidate, the man who would play Moses to our Israelites and lead us to Canaan after decades of distorted politics in which the leader invariably morphed into a small god... How can he and his team have managed to throw it all away in just two years? (Lucy Oriang, *Daily Nation*, 11 February 2005, cited in Murunga and Nasong’o 2006: 1)

The Kikuyu, in their continued loyalty to Kibaki,⁴ increasingly came to be regarded as arrogant and selfish, unwilling to support or accommodate other communities in the political arena and as betraying the country as a whole in their self-interested pursuit of power and wealth.

Kibaki’s presidency got off to a faltering start when tensions quickly emerged between the LDP and NAK factions over his failure to honour a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed prior to the election. The agreement laid down plans for the sharing of power, stipulating that a Prime Minister position would be created and allocated to the LDP leader, Raila Odinga, and that cabinet positions and other key governmental posts would be distributed evenly across the parties following consultations between the two major factions.⁵ However, after fifteen of the twenty-five ministerial positions were unilaterally given to NAK members, and only eight went to LDP, the rest being assigned to smaller

⁴ This perception of continued Kikuyu loyalty was affirmed, for many, by the overwhelming support Kibaki was able to garner in Central Province during the 2005 referendum.

⁵ While most interviewees framed the MoU as a single agreement between Raila and Kibaki which would install the former in a newly created Prime Minister post, the deal was arguably far more vague and generalised than this. Indeed, there were apparently two different agreements which were signed, with slight variations. Each stipulated that the cabinet positions would be divided evenly between LDP and NAK members and that both factions would meet following the inauguration to discuss other ministerial appointments. For an interesting insider account of the MoU and the events surrounding its collapse see Khamisi (2011: 88-91).

parties, members of LDP issued a statement accusing Kibaki of dishonesty and betrayal (Khamisi 2011: 90). Whilst at the time the issue did not dampen the post-election euphoria and optimism for the future, and ‘grumblings by LDP over positions backfired as Kenyans accused it of greed and ungratefulness’ (Khamisi 2011: 91),⁶ the failure to honour the MoU would come back to haunt Kibaki. Indeed, one journalist affirms in an article in the *Daily Nation*, that ‘yes, the dishonoured MoU was our eventual undoing’ (Munene 2009: 9). In light of subsequent events and political manoeuvres, the renegeing on the MoU would come to be reinterpreted as ‘yet another example’ of Kibaki’s betrayal of Kenya and the selfish and arrogant nature of the Kikuyu community:

In 2002 there was a Memorandum of Understanding, like a gentlemen’s agreement between Kibaki and Raila to create the Prime Minister’s office and decentralise power, but Kibaki went back on his promise. He lied and it was the genesis of the problems, they started portraying Kikuyu people as dishonest. “This is what happens, never trust a Kikuyu” (AB, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 13 December 2009).⁷

The numerous unfulfilled promises and perceived failures of the Kibaki administration as his term progressed facilitated this retrospective reading of the failed MoU. The administration’s commitment to anti-corruption was called into question by the exposure of the Anglo-leasing scandal⁸ and the subsequent, related resignation of John Githongo, the then-head of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) in 2005. This scandal was devastating to Kibaki’s government because it suggested continuity with the grand scale corruption of the Moi era, confirming the growing belief that ‘whichever way you look at it, the Narc Government is the same old Kanu Government, minus Moi’ (Barrack Muluka, *The*

⁶ An article appearing in the *Daily Nation* similarly states that the renegeing on the fifty-fifty position-sharing deal was not the source of immediate tension amongst the populace, stating that ‘Mr Kibaki was still recovering from an accident that had sent him onto [*sic*] a wheelchair in the sunset days of the campaign, and public sympathy rested with the recuperating old man, rather than the complaints from the Rainbow wing of the government’ (Munene 2009: 9).

⁷ Moreover, this perception of Kikuyu dishonesty and mistrustfulness is further reinforced by pervasive stereotypes of the community as thieves and conmen.

⁸ Anglo-leasing was a shadow company, supposedly from the UK, which was issued with a government contract to procure passport issuing equipment. The scandal implicated key figures in Kibaki’s administration. For more detailed accounts of this scandal see Githongo (2005) and Otieno (2005). Michela Wrong’s (2009) book detailing John Githongo’s experiences as head of the KACC and his subsequent exile is also of interest.

Standard 12 February 2005, cited in Murunga and Nasong'o 2006: 1). Furthermore, it became increasingly evident that there was a distinct 'Kikuyuization' of ministerial positions, senior civil servant posts and other 'plum' jobs. Murunga and Nasong'o (2006: 10) argue that the 're-emergence of political tribalism... became evident when Kibaki appointed his cabinet and top officials in the civil service and parastatal sector', and they detail the Kikuyu dominance of the clique of politicians and businessmen with whom Kibaki surrounded himself.⁹ Thus, in November 2005, when Kibaki sacked members of the government who had supported ODM in the referendum, further entrenching the Kikuyu dominance of top level jobs, it served as a clear indication that the administration had reverted back to the tribalism of the past, and fuelled the perception that the Kikuyu were fully intent on dominating the political, and indeed, the economic, scene to the exclusion of others.

The other partner [of NARC],¹⁰ the majority were Kikuyus, the leaders, the bigwigs. The Kibaki administration promoted tribalism because the appointments and the positions were biased to one tribe. The major ministries were given to the Kikuyu, the plum jobs were given to the Kikuyu, so the other tribes felt that they were being sidelined, that they weren't sharing the cake (M, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 4 June 2010).

However, it was the contentious draft constitution and the subsequent referendum which consolidated the perception of the Kikuyu as selfish, arrogant and isolationist. The ambitious promise of enacting a new constitution within 100 days of assuming power became almost impossible to fulfil as factions emerged within the NARC coalition over the 'people-driven' Bomas draft prepared by the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC).

⁹ While this analysis is not unjustified, it perhaps should be noted that, at least initially, the political tribalism of Kibaki's administration was less pronounced than is suggested by Murunga and Nasong'o's emphasis on continuity. Frances Stewart (2010: 139-140), for example, has indicated that there was, at first, a relatively equitable ethnic distribution of cabinet positions, though the Kalenjin were significantly underrepresented. While this is qualified by a diminished representation in assistant minister positions, and while senior civil servant positions were marked by an ethnic imbalance, it is important to recognise the ethnic diversity of the cabinet in the early days of the regime; it perhaps partially explains the continued optimism for Kibaki's administration throughout 2003, despite its failure to honour the MoU and to enact a new constitution within 100 days.

¹⁰ Here the interviewee refers to the NAK faction of the NARC coalition

Chitere et al. (2006: 3-4) point out that whilst there was a prior understanding that the bill would be based upon the recommendations laid out in this proposal, a dominant faction of the NARC coalition seemed reluctant to accept the draft without significant amendments. The key issues of contention revolved around curtailment of the presidential powers, the establishment of a parliamentary system, and the devolution of power through a federal system of government.¹¹ Thus, when the Proposed New Constitution of Kenya (the Wako draft) was subjected to a referendum in 2005 it was a greatly watered down version of the earlier Bomas draft. It maintained a unitary system of government and a powerful presidency and, as one interviewee recalls, there was a sentiment that ‘the Bomas draft was raped.’ (SINJ, Interview, Kibera, 1 January 2010). The proposed constitution was widely regarded as a betrayal of Kenyan democracy, an ‘anti-*Wanjiku*’¹² document which served the interests of hardliners within the government who were unwilling to compromise and give up their grasp on power (Chitere et al. 2006: 50). It was defeated by a significant margin, with 57 percent of the country voting against it. However, the Kikuyu community’s continued loyalty to Kibaki in this referendum highlighted their isolation from others. As a Kikuyu politician in the ODM party explains:

My people, my community, the Kikuyu voted banana¹³ almost to the last person, defending one of their own. The outcome isolated the Kikuyu from Kenyans, it became a campaign between the Kikuyu and the rest of Kenya. That mistrust continued up to the General Election. Other tribes saw the Kikuyu as selfish and always wanting to retain power by all means (SINJ, Interview, Kibera, 1 January 2010).

Many interviewees stress that in 2002 other communities did not selfishly pursue power for themselves, but rather put tribalism aside and united to support a Kikuyu candidate for the

¹¹ For a comprehensive examination of the three constitutions under debate during this period and the issues of contention raised by various factions, see Chitere et al. (2006).

¹² *Wanjiku* is a common Kikuyu name which came to refer to the ordinary Kenyan citizen after Moi dismissed attempts to construct a ‘people-driven’ constitution in the 1990s, exclaiming, ‘What does Wanjiku know about the constitution?’ (KHRC 2010: 11).

¹³ A banana was the symbol for the yes campaign, and an Orange the symbol for the no campaign in 2005.

good of the country. They lament the fact that, on the other hand, ‘the Kikuyu just vote for Kikuyu and they’re selfish // They were just born like that’ (MM, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 11 May 2010).

The Luos have voted for the Kikuyu and the Nandis have voted for the Kikuyu, this 2007, those people don’t want to vote Raila. So the people for Raila say, “Why won’t they vote for a Luo? (B, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 2 May 2010).

Indeed, this discourse was only further affirmed by Uhuru Kenyatta’s KANU party pulling out of the ODM alliance in July 2007 and returning to Kibaki’s PNU umbrella. One Luo youth explains:

The elders told us, “Those Kikuyu are not good people, they’re not one of us, they’re not with us. As you see in 2002 we supported them and we joined them in brotherhood and we fought for them. Now it is our time, they must help us, but as you see, Uhuru has gone back home to them, they’re not with us anymore” (AMC, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 8 May 2010).

Thus, by the 2007 campaigns there was a strong discourse of Kikuyu selfishness and unwillingness to support other communities. Amidst this perception, the rigging of the elections was seen to be yet another tactic employed by the dishonest Kikuyu to maintain power at the expense of Kenyan democracy, a tactic that would not be tolerated.

However, whilst there was a strong sense that Kibaki betrayed the country as a whole and squandered the opportunity for a united and democratic Kenya, more ethnicised interpretations of events were frequently adopted by my interviewees, as is evident in the two previous quotes. The tendency to frame social and political events in ethnic terms has been discussed at length in Chapter Three, and it has been illustrated that quarrels and disagreements between individual politicians, as well as particular policies and actions, are often taken as evidence that an entire ethnic community is being targeted. Thus, Kibaki’s failure to honour the MoU and to appoint Raila Odinga as Prime Minister was perceived as a betrayal of the Luo community. His opposition to Raila’s presidency in the 2007 elections was regarded as evidence that ‘those Kikuyu don’t want Luo to be in power’ (DO, Interview,

4B, Mathare, 4 May 2010) and that, ‘now it is our time to rule and the Kikuyu don’t want to give us our time to rule’ (JW, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 16 May 2010). Many interviewees incorporated the increasingly tense relations between Raila and Kibaki in the 2002-2007 period within a narrative of a continuous Kikuyu-Luo animosity which has persisted since independence, and an ever-present determination on the part of the former to exclude the Luo from political power. Indeed, many interviewees connected the disagreements between Kenyatta and Odinga in the early 1960s with those of Kibaki and Raila, some forty years later. Raila’s support of Kibaki in 2002, and his subsequent dismissal from the government in 2005, is equated with the situation between Kenyatta and Odinga in the 1960s when the emergence of bitter divisions within KANU ‘culminated in Odinga’s demotion from his position as party Vice-President’ and his subsequent resignation from the Cabinet to launch the Kenya People’s Union in 1966 (Throup and Hornsby 1998: 13). Thus, just as ‘Kenyatta kicked the Luo out of government’ (SD, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 16 March 2010), so too did Kibaki:

The Luos remembered that Kenyatta had betrayed Jarimogi and Kibaki had betrayed Raila, so the Kikuyu were the greatest enemy, so they came to hate each other (JUL, Interview, 56, Kawangware, 4 March 2010).

Moreover, the assassinations of prominent Luo politicians in the postcolonial period are similarly incorporated within these local discourses of a deep-rooted enmity which has persisted ‘since 1963 up until 2007’ (SD, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 16 March 2010). One interviewee, for example, suggests, ‘Kenyatta was accused of killing Tom Mboya so that hatred grew because it was like the Kikuyu have killed our man. Odinga was sacked and Kenyatta incited people and they started hating the Luo’ (BTS, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 14 April 2010). The construction of such narratives not only requires highlighting certain events and moments in time, but also suppressing and ‘forgetting’ others. The list of political figures who were assassinated in the early years of Independence, for example, includes,

among others, Pio Gama Pinto, a Kenyan Indian in 1965, Ronald Ngala, a Giriama in 1972, and J.M. Kariuki, a Kikuyu in 1975. Furthermore, the murder of the Luo foreign Minister Robert Ouko – one of the most high profile cases of political assassination in the country – occurred under Moi’s rule. Thus, the construction of a narrative of Kikuyu hostility towards the Luo as evidenced by the assassinations of Luo politicians necessitates a forgetting of the countless other politically-motivated killings which took place under both the Kenyatta and Moi regimes. In this way, then, drawing selectively upon a rich supply of past events, themes and relationships, the political animosities of the 2007 elections were not only justified, but also heightened and intensified by their incorporation within a discourse of permanent enmity and repeated betrayal and oppression of the Luo at the hands of the Kikuyu.

In a similar fashion, the perception that the ‘Kibaki administration and the House of Mumbi¹⁴ has systematically marginalised the Kalenjin community’ (Anon. 2008)¹⁵ was pervasive in the lead up to the 2007 elections and, just as in the case of the narratives of Luo exclusion, ‘this strongly ethnicized discourse of current “persecution” and “bias” was interwoven with those of past and potential “injustice”’ (Lynch 2008: 544). Signs of a perceived Kikuyu mistreatment of the Kalenjin community emerged early in Kibaki’s presidency when, addressing the overrepresentation of Kalenjin in top level positions which had developed throughout the Moi era, he sacked high profile members of the community, including Sally Kosgey, the head of the civil service, Zakayo Cheruiyot, the former permanent secretary for internal security, as well as the Kalenjin heads of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), GSU and Presidential Escort. Furthermore, the reshuffling of the military further entrenched the hegemony of the Kikuyu and other GEMA

¹⁴ Mumbi is the matriarch of the community in Kikuyu mythology and as such the House of Mumbi refers to the Kikuyu group as a whole.

¹⁵ This citation refers to a piece of propaganda that was circulating via email and weblogs in early 2008. Whilst a copy was given to me by an interviewee in Langas, Eldoret, a version of the text can also be found at http://www.amref.it/doc_din/Volantino_dell%27odio.pdf [Accessed 16 September 2012].

communities, largely at the expense of the Kalenjin, and there was a prevailing sentiment that members of the community were increasingly being excluded from employment opportunities.¹⁶ A newspaper article from *The Sunday Standard* states:

Earlier Biwott had complained that most professionals from the community had been sacked or retrenched from government. He said the Government had sidelined members of the community while making key appointments. “For instance, our youths have been locked out of police and army recruitments for more than four years now. We want the trend to change” (Batoo and Lucheli, 2007).

Thus, as a Kalenjin elder living in the Kikuyu village of Huruma states, when the government sacked these Kalenjin officials, ‘it brought a grudge, and the Head of State was a Kikuyu so it was seen as harassing’ (MZ, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 25 January 2010). Furthermore a few interviewees suggest that the way in which Moi was treated when he handed over power to Kibaki in 2002 was similarly indicative of Kikuyu abuse of, and disrespect towards, the Kalenjin community:

When Moi was thrown out he was not shown respect, mud was thrown at him and he is an old man. So there is a Kalenjin saying that when Moi got home he hung up his coat and for every drop of mud that dropped down from that coat, a Kikuyu will drop. How can they do that to an old person? So they had that grudge (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010).

In addition to these early signs of Kalenjin mistreatment under Kibaki, large-scale evictions of settlers in the Mau Forest, and heightened tensions in Likia following recommendations of the Ndung’u commission,¹⁷ provided fertile material to enrich the narrative of Kalenjin marginalisation.¹⁸ As Lynch (2008: 555) notes, these events were incorporated within ‘local discursive repertoires’ which highlight Kalenjin persecution at the hands of the Kibaki administration and were evident in inflammatory propaganda material circulated during the

¹⁶ For a detailed account of the rise of the ‘Mt Kenya Mafia’ during Kibaki’s rule, see Hornsby (2012: 711-713).

¹⁷ The Ndung’u commission is the Commission of Inquiry into the Illegal/Irregular Allocation of Public Land in Kenya (Republic of Kenya 2004). The findings constitute a damning report on the misallocation of land in the country.

¹⁸ Interestingly, Raila Odinga’s central role in the Mau Forest evictions in 2009 and 2010 has been subject to similar ethnicised readings and has increased tensions between the Kalenjin and the Luo communities. This illustrates the flexibility of the friend/enemy divide and the ways in which contemporary and historical events and narratives are employed and moulded to justify the current cleavage.

post-election violence: ‘They evicted our people in Mau, Likia and other areas. Bretheren, arise; this has come to an end.’ (Anon. 2008). Furthermore, this leaflet highlights the ways in which these narratives of contemporary marginalisation are interwoven not only with those of past injustices and contemporary marginalisation, but also with fears for the future:

Kwani, what is so special about this breed of people for them to own so much? They have greed and arrogance of catastrophic proportions. // They stole our votes and decided to maintain the status quo. Imagine what they will do in the next five years if you consider this will be their last term (Anon. 2008).

Similarly, a newspaper article in December 2007 reads:

On top of the anger over ways in which Kibaki’s government had gone against the community during his first term was the worry about what he might do should he get a second term...“There was a certain level of anger at what happened after Moi left. People needed to be told what Kibaki was going to do in the second term. The question was: ‘is he going to finish us?’” one former civil servant wondered (*The Sunday Standard*, 30 December 2007).

While narratives of past injustice and present perceptions of marginalisation are central to the transformation of the Kikuyu into ‘the enemy’, fears of future exclusion from power and resources are of far greater importance and played an important role in raising the stakes of the 2007 elections.

Thus, the impossibly high hopes and expectations which accompanied the NARC victory in 2002 were met with deep disappointments and disillusionment shortly thereafter. Repeated broken promises were regarded as a betrayal, and were incorporated within ethnicised narratives of marginalisation, persecution and exclusion. Anti-Kikuyu sentiment was high by the time of the 2007 election campaigns, and not only provided a rich material which ODM politicians could draw upon to mobilise supporters, but was also produced and reproduced by local level actors in everyday conversations, discussions and interactions.

Hate Speech and Incitement in the 2007 Campaigns

Analyses which have explored the outbreaks of ethnic violence surrounding elections in Kenya since 1992 have pointed to the role of elites in manipulating ethnic grievances and tensions, provoking hatreds and animosities, and triggering and inciting violence (for example, Oyugi 1997; Klopp 2001; Ajulu 2002; Oucho 2002; Brown 2003; Boone 2011).¹⁹ Some of the scholarship emerging about the 2008 violence similarly highlights the importance of this dimension. Klopp (2008), for example asserts that the post-election violence was ‘fuelled by strong men... exploiting ethnic identity’, Rambaud (2009: 88) states that ethnic tension was ‘revived by politicians’, and Chege (2008: 133) argues that ‘politicians stoked ethnic tensions... pitting the Kikuyu against Kenya’s other African ethnic groups.’ Moreover, evidence submitted to the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV) indicates that ‘inciteful utterances were made by politicians and their cronies on all sides of the political divide’ (CIPEV 2008: 41) and evidence from other commissions and organisations similarly indicate that the ‘use of covert hate speech, defamatory and unsavoury language continues unabated’ both in the 2005 referendum campaigns and again in the 2007 electioneering period (KNCHR 2006, 2007). My own research certainly confirms that politicians on both sides are culpable of heightening tensions, making use of inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech to mobilise their supporters against the opposition, and in some instances inciting people to violence. Indeed, they played an important role in the gradual transition from banality to bloodshed by encouraging the intensification of hate speech, and by instigating and provoking campaign-related violence. However, the focus on elite manipulation only tells one part of the story and an overemphasis

¹⁹ Wamwere (2003, particularly Chapter 9) seems at times to acknowledge the profusion of negative ethnicity at the local level, suggesting that parents, teachers, local party leaders and shop owners are important conduits for the spread of hatred – though he also, somewhat confusingly, makes a distinction between these ‘local opinion shapers’ and ‘the masses.’ However, he maintains that negative ethnicity is ‘manufactured’ in the ‘ideological factories of elites’ (2003: 95), and does not appear to allow for its construction at the grassroots.

on this dimension can be misleading; local level actors are not simply passive recipients of this rhetoric, but rather are active agents in its production and circulation. As Maupeu (2009: 201) states, ‘This ethnic nationalism of exclusion is not only a matter of manipulation by the elite. It is an ideology that now involves a lot of people.’ Hate speech is produced and reproduced at all levels of social agency and should not be understood simply as a phenomenon isolated to political campaigns, solely a tactic used by elites to mobilise supporters for a specific purpose; it is also something which is deeply embedded in everyday life and society. The rhetoric utilised by both politicians and local level actors during the 2007 campaigns can be understood as an intensification of the prejudice and hate speech which characterises Kenyan society. Similarly, while more direct incitements to violence were a feature of some politicians’ campaign speeches, they were also evident in interactions between local level actors as they policed politicised territories. This section argues, then, that animosity and hatred was cultivated and circulated at various levels of social agency²⁰ in 2007, and suggests that the difference between the hate speech of the political campaigns and the everyday negative ethnicity already discussed might lie primarily in its proliferation, intensity and interpretation rather than in its content. Furthermore, it suggests that incitement to violence operated both at the elite and the local level and that it legitimised and normalised increasingly violent politics, acting as a transition from the low-level violence of everyday life into the more widespread and acute form it took following the triggering events surrounding the presidential announcement.

The events of the 2002-2007 period, and the increasing resentment towards Kibaki, and by extension his Kikuyu community, were capitalised upon by ODM politicians to

²⁰ I focus predominantly upon the aspect of ‘speaking prejudice’, that is on political speeches and on everyday conversations and interactions here. However, it should be noted that the use of SMS, email, web-based discussions and other such mediums were also crucial in the dissemination and circulation of hate speech and incitement during the campaign period.

mobilise their supporters and raise the stakes of the elections. An alleged ODM strategy paper recommends that ‘regional pointmen’ should be utilised to ‘galvanise their respective communities around the anti-Kikuyu initiative’, given the strategy’s success in the 2005 campaigns (Anon. 2007).²¹ PNU politicians similarly adopted a distinct anti-Raila/anti-Luo rhetoric, and sought to cultivate local fears concerning future marginalisation under ODM rule. These tactics were hugely successful and many interviewees emphasise their importance in polarising the country and influencing inter-ethnic relations at the grassroots. A Nubian youth, for example, recalls:

There was lots of anti-Kikuyu sentiment // The country was polarised because of bad politics. The politicians put these hate speeches, tribalism, people became so tribalistic, you could hear it. When the violence erupted it was not shocking, because it was anticipated. // The propaganda was something brutal to the Kikuyus (AB, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 13 December 2009).

However, there were various dimensions to this construction of animosity, some of which were more direct, overt and sinister in nature than others. Indeed, given the intense ethnicisation of politics in Kenya, expressions which might in other contexts constitute normal campaign strategies, and be considered a relatively benign aspect of competitive politics, are often interpreted as ethnic abuse and hate. Several interviewees, for example, suggest that the ways in which leaders highlighted the failings and inadequacies of various politicians, parties and policies in their campaign speeches constituted a form of incitement and hatred. One interviewee states, ‘The way of campaigning, the method was hate. ODM were saying that Kibaki had failed to deliver promises, but we will’ (G, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 2 January 2010). Similarly, a Luo youth from Gatina explains:

There was some pushing and shoving among the aspirants because they’d come to these areas and in the rallies they incited the people. A politician came and on the podium he would say, “Don’t vote for so and so, he has done nothing good for the people and I am the best person” (CG, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware 8 April 2010).

²¹ For a detailed account of the use of hate speech, derogatory terms and incitement to violence in the referendum campaigns see KNCHR (2006).

As has already been discussed in Chapters Three and Four, in a highly ethnicised society, criticisms of individual politicians can easily be interpreted in ethnic terms, even when it is not overtly the case. Similarly, certain policies and proposals emphasised in political campaigns can be recognised as an attempt ‘to finish off’, to marginalise or to disenfranchise a particular community. For example, a key plank of the ODM manifesto concerned securing affordable housing in slum areas, and was interpreted by many as a call for a reduction, if not an eradication of rent for the urban poor. Given the fact that the landlords in many of these areas are predominantly members of the Kikuyu community, this policy had substantial ethnic overtones:

Like me, I’m a Kikuyu and this place, most of the landlords are Kikuyu. The other tribal leaders were saying that “If we win I’ll force those people to reduce the rent”, so I’m forced to vote with them to maintain that place because if our candidate won’t win then “I’ll throw you out” (J, Interview, Kobi, Kawangware, 1 March 2010).

Nevertheless, it is clear that overt negative campaigning was a prominent feature of the 2007 elections and that, ‘the politicians were too personal, destroying each other’s names’ (KAM, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 17 April 2010). At the PNU launch rally in Nyayo Stadium, for example, politicians openly referred to Raila Odinga as ‘One Dangerous Man’ in a play on the ODM acronym. Moreover, negative stereotypes and derogatory comments of Raila’s Luo identity were pervasive in the campaign, and undoubtedly heightened tensions:

Luos have darker skin, and when a politician says, “That man, black as the devil”, the message it sends to Kikuyu...// the Luos believe in Raila so much and the Kikuyu are saying that he’s the devil. Then it becomes cultural, like, “the Luo and the Nilots, they don’t circumcise, so how can he lead you?” // So you use my culture against your culture; what is repugnant to you, I vote for it. If you start saying that my culture is inferior to yours it’s very sensitive. If you want to cause a war with someone, belittle their culture. // So this propaganda was inciting. There was a meeting at Uhuru Park, they said “One Dangerous Man” or “One Demon something” (H, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 17 March 2010).

While negative campaigning is not an uncommon feature of politics across the world, the frequently ethnicised and cultural discourses which frame such dirty politics in Kenya has far

wider implications than simply tainting the name of the opposing candidate; it is often interpreted as, even if it is not directly, an insult to the community as a whole and feeds into feelings of superiority and inferiority, pride and humiliation. These sentiments were further triggered as politicians mocked entire communities in campaign speeches, drawing upon pervasive negative stereotypes to disparage opposing groups:

The problem is when a politician comes in, they use phrases that are common with people on the ground. They mock the tribes. Like one politician said, “If I come with half a loaf of bread and a soda and I give it to a Luhya, they’ll vote for me” because the Luhya are perceived to be impoverished and in need of food. So it is denoting [*sic*] for a politician to talk in public like that, it is inciting people and it brings hatred from the people he’s referring to, so the war will be there because wars start with words (UGA, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 7 April 2010).

It is interesting to note here that UGA stresses that these sentiments are ‘common with people on the ground.’ He highlights the fact that this tendency to demean ethnic communities and to play upon disparaging characteristics finds resonance with local level actors as it reflects the prejudices and negative ethnicity which inflect everyday conversation, discourse and interaction. Similarly, as Onyango (2008: 11) points out, ‘the circumcision trivia... is common rhetoric among the male circumcising groups of Kenya when referring to the Luo in negative terms.’ Similarly, PNU politicians frequently referred to Raila and other ODM politicians as ‘beasts’ or ‘animals’ from the West’ (Somerville 2011: 91), drawing on a common phraseology of Kenyan folklore which depicts the Luo community as ‘monsters’ and ogres (Wa-Mungai, 2007: 343). Thus, while undoubtedly more visible and pervasive through its employment by elite actors, this use of negative rhetoric is a part of the negative ethnicity, cultural violence and everyday prejudice which underscores Kenyan society, rather than simply a tactic unique to political mobilisation. The distinction between the hate speech and negative ethnicity which characterises everyday life and the incitement of animosity and hatred in periods of political transition is, at times, blurred and difficult to distinguish. Indeed, it is this very continuity which enables elite rhetoric to resonate so powerfully at the grassroots.

In addition to the prevalent use of ethnicised insult and abuse, elites very clearly stirred ethnic tensions by scapegoating communities and overtly depicting them as the source, or the potential source, of poverty and oppression. ODM politicians for example played upon existing sentiments and resentments over Kikuyu dominance in the political and economic spheres.

In 4A and 4B the campaigners used to incite those Luo telling them that “You people are like underdogs living on less than on a dollar a day, why is everything for the Kikuyus?” So the politicians used to incite them here (B, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare 12 April 2010).

GNM, a Kisii youth living in Huruma, Eldoret, draws stark attention to the ways in which politicians modify this rhetoric to resonate with people in different localities. He suggests that politicians seeking a seat in Mumias, for example, where there is a large sugar cane farm, will emphasise the fact that that while the sugar cane is grown in Mumias, the profits go to Central. He implies a similar dynamic at work in areas where land injustices are a particularly sensitive issue, suggesting that in these areas politicians state ‘Kenyatta took it and gave it to the Kikuyu.’ He concludes that, ‘because he’s poor and you’ve told him that there is someone behind his problems, he’ll become furious’ (GNM, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 29 January 2010). Similarly, PNU candidates emphasised the potential threat to Kikuyu livelihood and prosperity should ODM take power, and often reminded the community of their marginalisation and exclusion under Moi. As such, they sought to raise the stakes of the election, whipping up fears that an ODM victory would be devastating to the Kikuyu community and calling for the group to unite to ensure that power did not leave the hands of the House of Mumbi. A Nubian youth who was an active campaigner for PNU candidates, both at the civic and the parliamentary levels, illustrates how candidates would play upon these fears in campaign meetings and rallies:

They used to talk in Kikuyu which I couldn’t hear well, but my friend would tell me what they said later on. And they used to say, “We have to protect our country, our

nation from the bad people, the Luos. They're going to take this nation if we play, so we must preach to our boys to know that this Kenya won't be the same Kenya, they must fight for the nation so that the seat cannot move from our hands" (FZ, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 3 August 2010).

Another interviewee recalls the ways in which candidates would situate this rhetoric in localised contexts, explaining that politicians would come to their area and spark tensions by warning them that 'If Raila won the presidential seat, the Luos will take over Kosovo' (B, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 12 April 2010). According to Wa-Mungai (2007: 343), these fears of Luo rule are similarly commonly-heard expressions in Kenyan society and there is a pervasive sentiment that 'if you elect a Luo for president you will have it rough.' Thus, these narratives are not entirely the product of elite machination; they pervade everyday life, and they are as much a bottom-up project of ethnic narrative construction and production as they are top-down.

In addition to the prominence of ethnic hate speech in political campaigns in Kenya, more direct incitement to violence is also evident. A KNCHR (2006) report, for example, highlights the prevalence of this tactic by citing numerous examples of elite incitement during the 2005 referendum campaigns. For example, it quotes the Coastal province politician Najib Balala as saying, 'Those are people who have adopted the Banana stand,²² we do not want them, and if they come you are at liberty to beat them up' (2006: 32); similarly, the then-Assistant Minister for Energy is quoted as saying, 'People should prepare for war if NO wins'²³ (2006: 31); and a Central Province politician is cited as encouraging people to 'physically resist encroachment by the Orange team into Nyandarua' (2006: 30). Many, if not most, of these 'inciteful utterances' are designed to intimidate and 'to discourage voter participation in hostile areas' (Anon. 2007), however, and are not necessarily intended to

²² Here he refers to the Muslim Youth of Kenya group who had allied with the YES campaign, whilst Coastal Province communities were predominantly perceived to be allied with ODM in opposition to the draft constitution.

²³ It is interesting to note, however, that there was no violence following the NO campaign's success in 2005.

spark large-scale violence. Similar statements are evident in the 2007 campaigns as politicians sought to intimidate rival candidates and their supporters in particular areas, preventing them from conducting their campaigns or from demonstrating their support in particular areas through disruptive and often violent tactics. However, as has already been highlighted in Chapter Five, this tactic was also vigorously employed at the local level as a means of policing the boundaries of political behaviour within an area, both at the intra- and the inter-community level, and is tied in with grassroots debates over speculative loyalty, citizenship, and hopes and fears for the future. One interviewee told me, for example, that there were local level inciters who would say, “Don’t talk to that Luo!” (M, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 13 April 2010), and a Kikuyu youth in Kibera explained, ‘My neighbour is a Luo and he is incited by other Luos who don’t want to see certain tribes here.’ (CW, Interview, 42, Kibera, 16 November 2009). Thus, local level actors, particularly those with direct interests in a particular political outcome, such as landlords, incited ethnic fears in order to police the community and to mobilise them to vote on election-day.

In addition, repeated and very public warnings issued by ODM politicians affirming that they would not accept the results of a rigged election arguably served as a more covert rallying call encouraging violence in the event of a Kibaki victory. The alleged ODM strategy document suggests that this was part of a deliberate tactic designed to ‘prepare the ground for rejection of unfavourable results’ (Anon. 2007). Indeed, PNU politicians evidently recognised this, and on the eve of the election *The Standard* newspaper reported:

The two [Kalonzo and Raila] have declared that they would not accept results of a rigged poll... but PNU has, however, said their opponents had sensed defeat and were crying foul prematurely to set the stage for rejection of poll results (Ndegwa 2007).

Whilst the encouragement of the use of *violence* to contest the results was largely not overt in these statements made at the higher echelons of Kenyan politics,²⁴ vague references to a ‘rejection’ of unfavourable results were taken up by many local elites and ordinary people who reproduced them with more overtly sinister and threatening overtones. A Human Rights Watch report suggests that ‘around Eldoret local ODM mobilizers and other prominent individuals called meetings during the election campaign to urge violence in the event of a Kibaki victory’ stating that the reaction to a rigged election ‘should be “war” against local Kikuyu residents’ (Human Rights Watch 2008: 4). Similarly, a middle-aged Kikuyu man who ran for civic office in Huruma recalls that when he went to campaign in an area dominated by ODM supporters, ‘we heard people say “If there is an outcome that we won’t accept, be prepared to vacate”’ (GC, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 28 January 2010). Indeed, this violent interpretation of not accepting the results of a rigged election arguably relates to the normalisation and legitimisation of violence as a means of resolving social problems discussed in Chapter Four. The endemic corruption and inefficiency of the judiciary has devastated Kenyans’ confidence in an impartial and prompt response to electoral disputes. Indeed, a number of petitions following the 1992 elections took over a year, and some took up to three years to resolve (Abuya 2010: 159). In the case of *Kones vs. Republic and Electoral Commission of Kenya ex parte Kimani wa Nyoike* [2006] eKLR, the court states, ‘That the courts take such a long time to hear and determine election petitions is a serious blot upon the judicial system’ (Kenya Law Reports 2006). Thus, the interpretation of the call to reject unfavourable results in a violent manner is intimately linked to the identification of a weak and inefficient judiciary.

²⁴ Ruto’s campaigns in the Rift Valley can arguably be said to be a clearer illustration of direct incitement, and it is certainly the case that politicians at the lower levels of competition, as well as other local elites such as businessmen, chiefs and village elders, engaged in this encouragement of violence in the event of unfavourable results. However, for the most part, incitement to violence was employed in more subtle and vague terms and was highly dependent upon its interpretation as such by local level actors.

Perhaps the most prominent, and arguably the most sinister issue which heightened inter-ethnic hostility, and which, in some cases, served as a vehicle for more direct incitement to violence, was the sensitive question of *majimbo*,²⁵ and the deep hopes and intense fears which were attached to it. The *majimbo* debate has been a particularly divisive and highly emotive issue in Kenyan politics since its inception in the 1960s and its revitalisation in the early 1990s.²⁶ The issue was resurrected in the 2007 campaigns as ODM, addressing many Kenyans' deep desire for constitutional reform, promised a federalist system of government upon election. Given the association of ethnic groups with particular regions, for some communities *majimbo* offers the potential for greater power and inclusion in the political and economic spheres and an assurance of protection against marginalisation; indeed it resounds with grievances related to the unequal regional, and consequently ethnic, distribution of resources which has already been discussed. For others, however, the notion is tied to a more sinister proposal which calls for the ethnic homogenisation of ancestral homelands, and the 'repatriation' of 'foreigners', often through violent means. This latter understanding is largely a remnant of the negative connotations attached to *majimbo* by KANU politicians in the early 1990s, supporting Toft's (2003: 9) argument that elite constructions can 'become embedded in history, perception and interpretation', but it is also related to the territorialised identity narratives which are intrinsic to Kenyan society and consciousness. Thus, ODM leaders took an 'ostensibly pro-*majimbo* stance' and whilst they did not overtly advocate for the expulsion of foreigners, there was a deliberate vagueness to their elucidation of what the term meant

²⁵ The term means regionalism and it advocates for the devolution and decentralisation of power to the provinces.

²⁶ At independence *majimbo* was promoted by the smaller ethnic communities as a means of protecting themselves from the dominance of the larger groups. However, with calls for the reintroduction of multi-party politics in the early 1990s the *majimbo* debate was revived by key figures within KANU whose interests lay in the maintenance of the one party system. *Majimboism* came to be increasingly associated with a rhetoric of violence and intimidation against 'foreigners' and 'immigrants' who were living in the Rift Valley and clamouring for democratisation. Politicians played on fears of KAMATUSA marginalisation at the hands of larger communities, as well as on struggles over land, calling for outsiders to return to their homes and for the Rift Valley to be left to its native communities. For a detailed account of the history of *majimbo* see Anderson (2010).

(Anderson 2010: 50), facilitating its negative interpretation. A significant number of interviewees identify this ambiguous use of *majimbo* and the effects it had at the local level.

One interviewee states:

Because when Raila and Ruto were asked about *majimbo*, Kalonzo had finished explaining his understanding, and when they were asked they said, “What Kalonzo was thinking”, but they didn’t give their views in their own language and maybe they had a different understanding. You must explain it in your own language because the way you understand it might not be the same (MZ, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 25 January 2010).

Similarly, a report on the post-election violence by the International Crisis Group asserts:

The Orange movement tried to dissociate itself from the violent and ethnic chauvinist stigma attached to the *majimbo* debate but also knew the confusion would rally maximum support among the Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana, and Samburu... communities of the Rift Valley, as well as coastal populations (International Crisis Group 2008: 5).

Thus, a large number of interviewees pointed out that ‘it was understood badly’ (LF, Interview, Pondamali/Mwariki, Nakuru, 22 June 2010), that communities, particularly the Kalenjin, ‘understand it as all tribes should go back to their area’ (YW, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 14 January 2010), or that ‘they are understanding *majimbo* as the Kikuyu to go back to Central so they can get their land’ (GR, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret 19 January 2010). Thus, the ambiguity attached to *majimboism* interacted with embedded narratives of belonging to and ownership over space, facilitating its interpretation in autochthonous terms. Furthermore it fed into long-standing grievances over past injustices in the allocation of land and other resources and kindled hopes for future political power and prosperity. Thus, this elite ambiguity and the subsequent interpretation at the local level illustrate the ways in which top-down mobilisation interacts with bottom-up discourses and understandings of politics and society.

However, in addition to this lack of a clear definition of *majimbo*, a number of politicians reportedly employed rhetoric in their campaign speeches which more directly

encouraged its violent interpretation. References to ‘foreigners’ as *madoadoa*²⁷ and the need to remove these stains from the land were made in campaign speeches in the Rift Valley. A significant number of interviewees in Eldoret noted that in one particular campaign speech Ruto had declared that, following the election, all the Kikuyu would be carried back to Othaya in one pick-up truck. Similarly, a Kikuyu youth who claims to have delivered bread to Ruto during the campaigns, told me that on one occasion there was a campaign meeting taking place and that Ruto ‘was saying in his language “*Masangara*”, which means to be removed. *Masangara* is like when you are picking weeds from the garden’ (DAB, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 25 January 2010). These claims by my interviewees in Eldoret are further supported by evidence submitted to the Waki commission (the CIPEV), and clearly indicate high levels of elite incitement and the stirring up of anti-Kikuyu sentiment²⁸ in the Rift Valley region. Nevertheless, as has been pointed out throughout the above discussion, hate speech, inflammatory statements, and even more direct incitement to violence ‘was being spoken in all circles’ (AB, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, December 2009). Indeed, two KNCHR reports highlight the prominence of hate speech amongst local level actors and raise the important point that its utilisation by elites was both acceptable and welcome:

Unfortunately, Kenyans have come to cheer hate speech and have themselves become active agents of proliferation of hate campaign against politicians and fellow Kenyans (KNCHR 2007: 8).

We believe that politicians have used this type of uncouth and dangerous language in mobilising because there is a demand for it. Is this a general pointer of decadence in our society that this kind of language is acceptable in public? (KNCHR 2006: 107).

While the act of ‘speaking prejudice’ is evident in daily life, the campaigns acted as a period of transition, shifting the boundaries of acceptability and engendering a more prolific, overt

²⁷ Spots or stains. Interestingly, it has been suggested that references to *madoadoa* were not restricted to political campaigns but were part of ‘normal discourse’ in Uasin Gishu, Rift Valley (CIPEV 2008: 41), further reaffirming the suggestion that the distinctions between everyday negative ethnicity, and the incendiary language of political campaigns are blurred.

²⁸ In some regions animosities towards the Kisii were similarly stirred up as Simon Nyachae, arguably the most prominent Kisii politician, was a key figure in PNU.

and confrontational element to its use. Indeed, it is interesting to note that a resident of Shabab recalls, ‘In the campaigns you could see it coming out clearly, despite the politicians not mentioning it in the local village, then you’d hear people talk, the minor tribes didn’t want another Kikuyu rule’ (M, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 4 June 2010). As the election-day approached the use of abusive language and insults, for example, which in times of relative peace would be largely confined to in-group settings, became much more overt, pervasive and intense. A Luo youth who was living in a Kikuyu-dominated area during the campaigns states: ‘In those days I was there [in Kosovo] and there were some threats. They used to call us Luos baboons from Kisumu, you can’t rule because we’re not circumcised’ (JW, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 16 May 2010). Similarly, while the expression of prejudices and grievances against particular groups is usually policed and curtailed by social cuing in ethnically mixed situations, during periods of political tension negative ethnicity is not as frequently negotiated or deflected so as to avoid confrontation. A resident of Soweto in Kibera, for example, remembers that ‘even the neighbours from that tribe, they were saying “you people have ruled for a long time”’ (D, Interview, Soweto, Kibera, 30 November 2009). Similarly, a Kikuyu youth from Nakuru states:

We were throwing words at each other and the Luos said “Our person will win and if he wins he’ll take all your houses, they’ll be ours.” And we told them, “We’ve sweated for it! How can you just come and take houses?” But we were just joking around. It started to get more serious and we told our Luo friends “If our person wins you’ll get out of this place and all of you will go.” We were just arguing and they said, “Hey if our person wins you Kikuyu will leave and if you live in this place, you’ll be wearing shorts because we’ll be ruling.” // We told them, “We’ll wear shorts but we’ll go and rearrange ourselves and we’ll come back and while you may be wearing trousers we’ll all be men because you are not circumcised.” We told them, “You don’t own businesses, you are our workers, so if you take us from there saying that we’ll wear shorts, then we will marry your girls because you will have nothing” (ND, Interview, Ronda, Nakuru, 9 June 2010).

In this anecdote, arguments about the presidential candidates not only degenerate into ethnicised verbal abuse and insults, playing upon issues of superiority and inferiority, but

they also draw attention to key political issues at the root of ethnicised fears for the future. The Luo contingent in this situation highlight the threat to the Kikuyu community should ODM win the election by emphasising the assertion that tenants would no longer have to pay rent to their Kikuyu landlords under an ODM government. Moreover, issues of power, pride and superiority, are embedded within these arguments. The Luo's threat that following Raila's ascension to the presidency the Kikuyu will have to vacate the area alludes to *majimboist* discourses and territorialised identity narratives. Furthermore the notion that should they be allowed to remain in the area they will be 'wearing shorts' is suggestive of an inferior status²⁹ that will be brought about by Luo power and superiority. The Kikuyu retorts are similarly suggestive of perceptions of ethnic superiority, emphasising Kikuyu dominance in business and using cultural practices to point to Luo inferiority. Thus, in the same way that political elites make use of negative ethnic stereotypes, insults and verbal attacks, they are equally as prolific in everyday conversations and arguments between local level actors. Furthermore, the recognition of these exchanges as straddling the line between joking and seriousness points to the continuity between everyday prejudice and the negative ethnicity of the campaigns. A significant number of interviewees explained that they did not take insults, abuses, threats and warnings seriously at the time, dismissing them as 'normal' jokes, or as something typical to Kenyan politics: 'We just took it as campaigning, that it was not serious' (B, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 25 January 2010). The distinction between the hate speech and negativity which pervades everyday life and the incitement of animosity and hatred in periods of political transition is, at times, blurred and murky; it is not entirely recognisable even to those who perpetrate it, and who are subjected to it.

A final point worth reiterating and expanding upon here is the relationship between socio-spatial dynamics and the act of 'speaking prejudice' which was identified in Chapter

²⁹ In that it is understood that young boys wear shorts.

Four. Ethnicised spaces facilitate the circulation of hate speech, prejudice and ethnically skewed interpretations of the political setting, and they witness more frequent instances of violence during the campaigns as residents police the political behaviour of the community. The emotive elements of hopes, expectations, fears and animosities that surrounded the 2007 elections are heightened and intensified by their frequent expression in these areas and everyday conversation and interaction can solidify ethnicised interpretations of events. On the other hand, in ethnically mixed areas the intensity of ethnic hatred is constrained, as it is not as frequently reproduced or circulated by local level actors. Indeed, while a number of interviewees in these areas report a few arguments during the campaigns they stress that such disagreements did not engender any deeply felt animosity; rather ‘it was just jokes, it brought no hatred’ (CS, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 18 May 2010). Similarly, another interviewee states:

People were just joking around, like both parties were saying “We’ll win” and others were saying, “we’ll see”, but it was just joking, there was no fighting, it was just in that friendship way (K, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 19 May 2010).

As is indicated in this interview, ethnically mixed areas witnessed far fewer incidents of violence during the campaigns since they were not subject to the same policing of political behaviour as are highly ethnicised, and therefore highly politicised, spaces.

Thus, while the focus on elite incitement and manipulation which persists in the literature is not unjustified, attention to the grassroots dynamics illustrates not only why it resonates, and where it does so, but also demonstrates that the high stakes nature of Kenyan elections and the intense emotions they evoke, can engender intense local level hate speech and incitement to violence.

The 2007 Elections: Transitions, triggers and the importance of emotion

The high stakes nature of the 2007 elections engendered intense feelings of hope, fear, suspicion, disappointment, frustration, resentment and anger in the lead-up to polling day, during the counting process and in the aftermath of the announcement of the results, particularly the result of the presidential election. While the ‘rationality’ of violence is often emphasised in the literature on ethnic conflict, the importance of emotions in triggering and feeding into violence is being increasingly explored in scholarship (Kaufman 2001; Petersen 2002; Suny 2004). In the Kenyan context Lynch (2008: 567) has alluded to this dimension, stating that ‘to understand the election’s aftermath... one must understand the intense emotion and hope associated with this high stakes election’ as well as the events ‘which helped transform expectation and hope into popular frustration and anger.’ Githinji and Holmquist (2008: 348) similarly emphasise the significance of emotions, stating that ‘the popular disappointment was crushing and the anger extreme.’ In addition, investigations into the post-election violence draw attention to the fact that anger and a deep sense of injustice over the flawed elections were important drivers of the conflict (CIPEV 2008; KNCHR 2008). This section explores the ways in which these emotions developed and intensified over the course of the elections and the counting period, arguing that the specific sequence of events further intensified feelings of hope, disappointment, anger, injustice, and resentment amongst political elites and local level actors alike, sparking incidents of violence on the ground.

In many ways, the 2007 elections echoed the political environment of 2002. In the context of significant disillusionment with the Kibaki administration, for many Kenyans ODM was regarded as a bastion of democracy amidst endemic corruption. Campaigning on a platform of change and reform, just as NARC had done before it, ODM generated the same sense of euphoria that had been witnessed in 2002. Indeed, there was a strong sense that ‘Kenyans felt that they were cheated’ (M, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 4 June 2010) by

Kibaki's administration, and that ODM offered a second opportunity for the change that the country had been yearning for since the Moi regime. Many interviewees highlight this intense desire for change in 2007 and suggest that there was a pervasive sentiment that 'the hopes of all Kenyans were in Raila' (B, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 15 January 2010). Indeed, the vast and unprecedented voter turnout across the country and the fact that large numbers of people woke in the early hours of the morning to join the queues at the polling stations and make sure their vote was counted is, in part, explained by this excitement.³⁰

We woke up very early, at 4am, to vote for our fellow candidates. // there was a very big queue. At 4am I thought I would be the first, but I was not. There were like 1000 people there in the twilight hours. (T, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 28 January 2010).

Given the multi-ethnic nature of ODM's pentagon members, and the fact that the party was seen as an alliance of forty-one tribes setting themselves against one, many Kenyans firmly believed that ODM could not be defeated if the elections were free and fair. While it was widely perceived that Central Province would remain loyal to their man,³¹ and parts of Eastern would vote for Kalonzo Musyoka, ODM was believed to enjoy considerable support in Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley, North Eastern and Coastal provinces. According to this 'ethnic arithmetic' then, Raila was expected to win; indeed, 'there was a sense that he'd already won because of the support he had from all regions' (MN, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 19 April 2010) and 'the rest was just a formality' (K, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 4 December 2009). Many interviewees suggest that these expectations were further strengthened by the wealth of pre-election polling information, which 'showed that ODM were leading, so we were 100% sure that ODM would win' (SSB, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 15 March 2010). Despite this sense of an almost certain ODM victory amongst

³⁰ Intense fears for the future on the part of PNU-affiliated communities also contributed to this high voter turnout. Indeed, as an article in *The Standard* highlights, 'Central Kenya...will overwhelmingly vote for Kibaki, saying, "We will not breathe if 'those people' come to power"' (Malanda, 2007).

³¹ While some interviewees conceded that Kibaki was also popular in Eastern Province the overwhelming understanding of the political situation in 2007 was that PNU had the support of only one community, and only one province.

its supporters, however, the presidential race was in fact the tightest contest the country had ever witnessed. While pre-election opinion polls tended to put Raila ahead, this was by a far narrower margin than many of my ODM-affiliated interviewees suggest, particularly in the final stages of the campaign.³² However, as Cheeseman (2008: 168-169) points out, while the Steadman Group and Consumer Insight indicated that the election was ‘too close to call’, misleading polls by Strategic Research and Infotrak Harris consistently put Raila ahead by a sizeable margin and contributed to the disappointment and outrage at Kibaki’s victory. Consequently, a significant number of Kenyans remained convinced that an ODM defeat at the polls was all but impossible, as long as the democratic process was honoured by the incumbent.

However, election fraud and malpractice has been a characteristic of Kenyan elections since independence and people are acutely aware of this fact. During many informal discussions with friends and assistants they would often emphasise that the incumbent is always at an advantage and is difficult to oust from power. One interviewee laments, ‘it is obvious that we’ll never beat a government in power in Africa, the opposition will never beat the government, they’ll use public resources and securities to retain the seat’ (NM, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 1 June 2010). Under the Kenyatta and Moi regimes, ‘the executive has always found the means for “fixing” the electoral machine to the benefit of the preferred candidates’ (KNCHR 2008: 21) and ‘virtually all elections in the multi-party era in Kenya have been manipulated’ (Njogu 2011: xiii). Nevertheless, the 2002 elections were, at the time, widely regarded as a turning point in Kenyan electoral politics, passing by with far fewer incidents of violence than ever before and seeing the removal of the long-standing

³² Indeed, Kibaki did not officially announce his candidacy until 16 September 2007. After this, opinion polls pointed to a steadily narrowing gap between Kibaki and Raila. The final Steadman Group poll released on 18 December placed, Kibaki at 43 percent with Raila at 45 percent and Kalonzo Musyoka trailing with just 10 percent (*The Standard* 19 December 2007).

incumbent KANU party. However, the subsequent and ever-increasing sense of disillusionment with this new era of Kenyan democracy reached its apex in the last elections and ‘for many Kenyans the rigging of the 2007 presidential election was the final betrayal on the agenda for change’ (Human Rights Watch 2008: 3).

Rumours of a government plot to rig the upcoming elections began to emerge in the early stages of the campaign period. They were produced and reproduced in everyday gossip and conversation, as newspaper reports, op-ed pieces, radio shows, campaign rallies, emails, text messages, and weblogs alluding to rigging plots were circulated and were widely discussed. In early December, for example, there were newspaper reports of parallel ballot papers being printed in Belgium (Rambaud 2009: 66), and throughout the campaigns there were rumours of various plots to rig Raila out of his Langata seat and therefore to disqualify him from the Presidential race (Osborn 2008: 318).³³ Moreover, fears that Kibaki would rig the election were further inflamed by local level actors who would attest that ‘hook or crook we have to stay’” (PAD, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 15 December 2009). One Luhya interviewee recalls that in September 2007 as he was travelling back to Nairobi in a matatu, he and a fellow Luhya got into a discussion about the upcoming elections and were expressing their certainty that Raila would win. He states:

We were just talking peacefully, but everyone in the matatu joined in and it was a very big argument. They said that no other community will lead and they’ll use their economic might. The matatus, they are owned by the Kikuyus. They parked the matatu and forced us to alight and take another vehicle (SSB, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 15 March 2010).

This anecdote not only indicates that local discourse equally alluded to the potential for Kibaki to rig the elections through the use of his economic power, but it is also further indicative of a Kikuyu sense of political superiority and right to rule which underscores many

³³ This perception was further fuelled on the election-day itself when Raila’s name was one of those missing from the electoral register.

tensions in Kenya. Thus, by early December newspapers were reporting that ‘ominously a recent opinion poll shows that 51 per cent of those polled believe the General Election will be rigged’ (*The Saturday Standard*, 8 December 2007).

On the eve of the election, rumours of marked ballot papers being transported to various constituencies sparked some localised incidents of violence across the country. In Eldoret, for example, a group of youths burned a vehicle that had been used by ECK officials carrying election materials to a polling centre in Keiyo constituency; in Mombasa, youths were stoning matatus they suspected were carrying fake ballot papers; a ‘new wave of violence racked western region’ and Nyanza over rigging allegations; and in Kisii riots broke out as mobs chased people they believed to be administration police officers involved in a plot to rig the elections (*Daily Nation*, 27 December 2007). One interviewee from Eldoret recalls:

When the campaign was over and we had just two days to the election, some rumours broke that some campaign materials were seen and that there was a plot to rig, so there was lots of tension. I don’t know if they were rumours or if it was true. But a bus was seen and the owner of the bus, he was PNU, and it was with election materials. But the police calmed the situation and we relaxed (GC, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 28 January 2010)

Rumours sowed the seeds of suspicion that Kenyans might be cheated out of their democratic rights by the government. Nothing short of a flawless management of the electoral process by the ECK, it appeared, would be satisfactory to the Kenyan people, particularly if the results were to be counter to expectation.

Despite a few isolated problems on the polling day itself which generated tensions over potential election fraud taking place – such as ‘the names starting with O, the Luo names, couldn’t be found in the polling stations’ (HP, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 15

June 2010),³⁴ and widespread accusations of politicians buying votes outside the polling centres – the elections themselves went relatively smoothly.³⁵ However, it was the delays, irregularities and confusions during the tallying process which confirmed, for many, that the government was rigging the election. While this discussion focuses predominantly on the presidential vote, it should be noted here that accusations of malpractice in civic and parliamentary elections were rife and many local counting centres experienced violence and intimidation as candidates and their supporters disagreed over the results. For example, interviewees who had been heavily involved in the campaigns in Dagoretti constituency report that violence broke out at Kenya Science, a teaching college where the tallying was taking place, as rumours that candidates were rigging the election abounded. One interviewee, who had been campaigning for the ODM candidate, KJ, recalls that when he arrived at the centre ‘we saw some boxes, they were not sealed, so we sensed irregularities there’ and he indicates that the youths with whom he was campaigning tried to prevent the returning officer from leaving Kenya Science to report the results at KICC’ (JU, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 16 March 2010). Another interviewee, campaigning for the PNU candidate Beth Mugo states:

Like here in Dagoretti, a boy [KJ] passed for MP but then the other MP [Beth Mugo], she rigged the election. In Dagoretti the voting was done in two locations, but the counting was at Kenya Science. I was a chief campaigner so we went to Kenya Science to see the results. When we entered there, there was a big fracas because of KJ and Beth Mugo rigging. They started fighting.// I was one of them fighting because I’m a PNU member (CHOC, Interview, Waithaka, 8 March 2010).³⁶

Similarly, the *Daily Nation* reported clashes breaking out in Kamkunji constituency as candidates accused each other of rigging, and the ODM candidate Ibrahim Ahmed ‘said he

³⁴ This problem affected Langata constituency specifically and was well-reported in the Kenyan and international media.

³⁵ Though, again, there were some isolated incidents of violence following rumours of rigging, including a riot in Mumias town which killed three, as youths attacked a building believed to be storing ballot papers (*Daily Nation*, 28 December 2007: 2).

³⁶ CHOC here seems to suggest that both candidates were involved in rigging tactics.

would not accept the results, claiming they were interfered with' (*Daily Nation*, Saturday 29 December 2007); and *The Standard* described the interruption of counting in both Garsen constituency (Mbaji 2007) and Mukurweini constituency (Ngigi 2007) as youths destroyed ballot boxes and burned papers amidst rigging claims.³⁷ It is important to note, therefore, that allegations of rigging in local level contests, both by ODM and by PNU candidates, fed into rumours of fraud on a grander scale in the presidential election and, moreover, set the precedent for the use of violent tactics to challenge the results.

Nevertheless, it was the presidential count and the increasing tensions at KICC which served to provoke fear, frustration and anger amongst the general population. In the early stages of the counting process, Raila took a commanding lead, and by the end of the day on the Friday, Kibaki was trailing him by almost a million votes. This further consolidated the sense of an assured victory for Raila and ODM which had marked the campaign period. Indeed, some interviewees suggest that ODM supporters during this phase of the counting were already celebrating their perceived victory:

In a PNU zone, like here, there was a group of Luo, like six, and I saw that they were busy listening to the radio and whenever they heard that ODM had won in a particular place, they were celebrating. Imagine! They were celebrating in an area which does not belong to them. So incidents started and they chased them (MW, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 5 June 2010).³⁸

However, as Throup (2008: 293) points out, 'the first seventy results... came disproportionately from ODM strongholds' and these 'were geographically more compact and had fewer voters than Kibaki's strongholds.' As the results from Central began to be

³⁷ Garsen is in Coastal Province, and Mukurweini is in Nyeri, Central Province.

³⁸ MW's outrage at the audacity of ethnic minorities celebrating in another community's space highlights the sense of territorialised identity and expectations of political acquiescence which underscores Kenyan politics and inter-ethnic relations, and further illustrates the increasing use of violence during this period.

announced, the gap between Raila and Kibaki narrowed significantly.³⁹ One interviewee states:

The media house, KTN, were saying that there was no way that Raila can be reached. How can this man be reached? So the ODM followers, the Kalenjin and the Luo, they knew that they had won. // The blunder they made was that they started counting with the strongholds of Raila, but they had not touched Central Province (MW, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret, 20 January 2010).

Kibaki's numbers increased significantly over the Friday night and into Saturday morning. The fact that this happened in the dead of night appears to have contributed to suspicions that there was something untoward going on at KICC, and many interviewees emphasise the fact that they had gone to sleep secure in ODM's impending victory, but had awoken the next day to find Raila's lead had vanished. Throughout the day on Saturday, Kibaki continued to gain ground on Raila and by 2.30pm 'only 38,000 votes separated the two leading presidential candidates' (Throup 2008: 294). At the elite level this announcement prompted fierce arguments and disagreements between various politicians and the ECK chairman, Samuel Kivuitu, and 'created pandemonium at KICC.' (Throup 2008: 294). Many interviewees recall these arguments in detail, particularly the altercations between Ruto, Martha Karua, James Orengo and Kivuitu,⁴⁰ and suggest that 'as they argued, back on the ground things became harder' (MS, Interview, Ronda, Nakuru, 10 June 2010). At the local level, tensions were steadily rising, 'people started to become hysterical, confused, anger was building, anger was building inside' (ELIM, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 20 November 2009). In a number of my field sites this increasing frustration provoked arguments and confrontations, sometimes violent ones, through the course of Saturday. For example, a Kikuyu youth from Shabab recalls:

³⁹ It should be noted that Kalonzo Musyoka's numbers consistently trailed the other two candidates by a substantial margin.

⁴⁰ Ruto was disputing the results from certain constituencies, telling Kivuitu 'you cannot continue reading results which are not real', James Orengo was calling for a recount, and Martha Karua was protesting that ODM should seek to settle any disputes in court following the election (*The Standard*, 31 December 2007).

The chaos started especially in the pub and people were arguing to the extent that they were throwing bottles at each other. In that time in the pub the chaos started like, “Yesterday all through the day and night we were winning, and then this morning we are overtaken?!” They started to say that it was rigging, that’s when they got angry throwing bottles to each other // and the president hadn’t yet been announced (AZ, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 6 June 2010).

Thus, incidents of violent confrontation increased during this period marking a movement along the continuum towards more intense and widespread violence.

Kivuitu’s own confusion and suspicion regarding irregularities in the results inflamed this growing sense of unease surrounding the tallying process. He raised questions over the delays to the arrival of ballot boxes from areas in Central and Eastern province;⁴¹ he was confused by his inability to communicate with several returning officers who had apparently turned off their phones; and he was growing suspicious by ballot boxes arriving without Form 16A⁴² attached, without it signed, or with amendments made to the results. Kivuitu openly and publicly voiced his concern that these indicated a possibility that the results were being ‘cooked.’

Thus, serious questions were being raised as to the neutrality and impartiality of the ECK, not only by politicians and Kenyan citizens, but by the chairman himself. Moreover, its credibility had already been questioned during the campaign period as Kibaki, without consulting other party leaders, had unilaterally appointed five commissioners to the ECK in January 2007, and had waited until the last minute to renew Kivuitu’s contract which expired on 2 December. Even before the problems of the counting process, then, the independence of the commission had been a point of heated debate. This, in conjunction with the increasing confusions as to the validity of incoming results and the delayed arrival of others, entrenched the belief that the elections were being rigged and that components within the ECK were

⁴¹ Kivuitu pointed out that these constituencies are served by good roads and so he could not understand why there were such significant delays in receiving the results (Throup 2008: 295).

⁴² A statutory document declaring and validating the results from each constituency.

involved.⁴³ As one interviewee exclaims, ‘It was obvious that rigging was taking place. You could see on TV that there was confusion at KICC’ (SSB, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 15 March 2010).

The announcement was further delayed as Kivuitu, the ECK team, and representatives from ODM and PNU scrutinised ballot papers and sought to resolve the discrepancies in some of the results through the night of Saturday 29 December, and for the better part of the following day (Throup 2008: 296). However, by late afternoon on Sunday, under increasing pressure to declare the winner, Kivuitu attempted to read the results. After continued interruptions and disputes from ODM politicians the ECK chairman was whisked away under police escort and, in a sealed room, accompanied by a select media presence, of which the state-controlled KBC was the only Kenyan media company represented, announced Kibaki as the winner. The power was cut to the main conference hall as ODM held a live press conference, and within the hour Kibaki was sworn in as President at State House in a private ceremony. The events surrounding the announcement featured prominently in my interviewees’ narratives, and there is a strong sense that the fact that Kivuitu had been taken to another room to announce, the fact that there was a blackout, and the fact that the state-controlled KBC was the only vehicle for the announcement,⁴⁴ confirmed that ‘something fishy was going on’ (PET, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 24 March 2010), that the results had been manipulated, and that Kibaki had ‘stolen’ the election. The haste and secrecy with

⁴³ Interestingly, in December 2011, four years after the bungled elections, Kivuitu publicly expressed his opinion that the ECK appointments had eroded public confidence in the impartiality of the ECK even before the elections were underway (*Daily Nation*, 29 December 2011).

⁴⁴ Many interviewees state that they do not trust KBC as they believe that it has always been manipulated by the government. One interviewee vehemently exclaims, ‘Only KBC beamed the results. Like me, I grew up in Kenya, and I hated KBC, it was a mouthpiece for the government. So the other TV channels were blackout, so we turned to KBC. // they announced Kibaki had won and we didn’t want to know the margin, it was a clear and open lie’ (K, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 4 December 2009).

which Kibaki was sworn into the presidency was the final straw ‘proving’ the announcement was a sham:⁴⁵

They announced Kibaki in the evening, he was sworn in at night and in our life we’ve never seen a President sworn in at night. It is supposed to be done in the day with many witnesses and dignitaries from other countries. Even looking back to Moi, when he stepped down and he handed over power to Kibaki, it was in public. So these things should be done in a clear manner, at night it is very suspicious and it made us think that the election was stolen (M, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 8 April 2010).

Given the high expectations of an ODM victory, the deep disappointment of the announcement was markedly visible, and as Raila’s substantial lead disappeared the atmosphere ‘changed from celebration to humiliated defeat’ (GC, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 28 January 2010). Following the announcement, Raila was seen to be wiping tears from his eyes as he addressed the nation and several interviewees highlight how this resonated deeply with the feelings of local level actors. One interviewee states, ‘when we saw on TV that Kibaki won, we saw that Raila and Ruto and all the ODM MPs, they were in tears. It’s when the chaos erupted. They saw the tears of their leaders’ (MED, Interview, Eldoret Town, 19 January 2010). Another suggests that people ‘feel the pain he is undergoing. They feel that their person is being harassed’ (JUL, Interview, 56, Kawangware, 4 March 2010). A similarly deep disappointment was expressed or witnessed by a number of my interviewees who suggest that ‘election rigging hurt Kenyans and through that hurt they got angry’ (HP, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 15 June 2010), and ‘I saw people crying physically’ (K, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 4 December 2009). Recalling the moments immediately following the announcement of Kibaki, a Kikuyu resident of Kibera states:

At the announcement me and my wife were sitting at home. // At that time I was the only Kikuyu living here, all the others were Luo. My TV was not on, I was fearing. // I slept with my panga like this [*he demonstrates by placing the blade of his panga*

⁴⁵ For an extremely detailed analysis of this process, see the Kriegler report, in particular Annex 4A (Republic of Kenya 2008). In this annex, the analysis concludes that while the tallying process demonstrates the incompetence of the ECK, ‘it does not come close to prove wrongdoings, fraud and deception’ (Republic of Kenya 2008: 8).

underneath the cushion of his sofa]. I was shaking. // Then I heard my neighbour crying – an old man... I heard the neighbour crying and sharpening his panga. He was crying ‘*Kikuyu ameiba*’ which means the Kikuyu have stolen (WAW, Interview, Bombolulu, Kibera, 11 November 2009).

Thus, this transformation of high hopes and expectations into deep disappointments fuelled the rioting and violent protests of the immediate aftermath of the announcement. Moreover, people were furious with the apparent rigging of the election and felt that their rights had been violated once again by the selfish and arrogant Kikuyu. One interviewee recalls ‘people were very, very angry. How can he [Kibaki] win with only one province? This is what made people mad, they felt he had cheated’ (NDG, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 13 November 2009). Further inflaming this anger, and sparking the violence in many of my field sites, however, was the celebratory reactions of members of the Kikuyu community. As one interviewee states, ‘Those who were very happy, they didn’t sleep, they celebrated through the night. // The ODM supporters there weren’t happy with the way the PNU supporters had behaved, so they decided to retaliate’ (SSW, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 6 April 2010). Many interviewees state that initial acts of violence were targeted at groups of Kikuyu who were openly celebrating the announcement, particularly if they were doing so in an area which does not ‘belong’ to them. As a resident of Kaptembwa recalls:

I saw some three Kikuyus in that area of Checkpoint, they were not in their territory. They were celebrating the winning of their president, while we were still confused. // people started throwing stones at those three Kikuyu (JF, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 17 June 2010).

The importance of the way in which communities are seen to be reacting to events which are regarded as harmful to another group is further highlighted by a Kalenjin youth. I asked him about how the Kalenjin community might react if Ruto were to be named as a suspect by the ICC. He said, ‘The Kalenjin will go crazy. It depends, the best thing to see, how do your neighbours react? If Kikuyu clap and celebrate then there is trouble, but if they say, “we’re against this, we support you...”’ (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010). Thus, the

Kikuyu's celebration of Kibaki's victory was regarded as tacit acceptance of his thievery and betrayal of Kenyans:

If you support a thief to steal, you also become a thief. For us, we believe they are also thieves. They should tell him [Kibaki], "No. You've been voted out." But no; they ended up celebrating after the announcement (X, Interview, Lindi, Kibera, December 2009).

Finally, while clearly the immediate violent response to the apparent rigging of the elections was highly ethnicised and reflected resentments of Kikuyu dominance, superiority and selfishness, it was equally the result of a lack of an alternative vehicle through which to express this sense of injustice and frustration. As one interviewee explains 'some of the results were not expected. I was angry. // When the election was stolen I had no other way to express my anger and disappointment' (WL, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 15 January 2010). This draws attention to the relationship of the post-election violence to weak democratic institutions, to the corrupt and ineffective judicial system, and to the normalisation of violence in Kenyan society as a means of resolving social problems. Throughout the crisis the refrain which was chanted in the streets was '*haki yetu, haki yetu*' and '*tunaenda haki yetu!*'⁴⁶ Many interviewees regard their participation as 'asking for justice' (BEAT, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 7 April 2010) and suggest that 'I went to the streets to ask for my rights to vote' (MUS, Interview, 4B, Mathare 29 April 2010). The lack of alternative mechanisms of pursuing justice plays a significant role in the normalisation of violence as a means of protest, effecting change, and resolving social conflict.⁴⁷ Several interviewees allude to this sense of powerlessness and their inability to affect the government or to seek justice through democratic institutions and processes. A Luo youth who had been a candidate

⁴⁶ 'Our rights, our rights' and 'we are going for our rights'

⁴⁷ For a discussion of this in the context of Nepal see Pfaff-Czarnecka (2004). He identifies similar expectations and disappointments in democratic transitions in Nepal, and a subsequent increased readiness to consider alternative political options, including the violent Maoist movement. However, Pfaff-Czarnecka suggests that protest is limited in Nepal due to 'the lack of such a tradition in many parts [of the country]' (2004: 183). As has already been discussed in Chapter Four, this is not the case in many parts of Kenya, and indeed, violence has become normalised and is seen as a legitimate means of resolving conflict and effecting justice.

for a civic seat in Kibera explains that ‘people were venting their anger on their friend because they could not reach the system’ (KOT, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 6 December 2009) and similarly a member of a youth group Kianda states:

It was a fight between the people and the government. The government stole the vote, so people are fighting for their rights. People were frustrated and you don’t have the capability of fighting the government, so you vent your anger against your neighbours (HA, Group Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 15 November 2009).

Thus, while some of the violence indicates high degrees of organisation, a dimension that is explored further in Chapter Seven, the immediate outbreak of violence was triggered by the intense emotions surrounding the rigged elections, and is more akin to Horowitz’s (2001) ‘deadly ethnic riot’, that is ‘an intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly unplanned, lethal attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group’(2001: 1), than to the more prolonged and complex dimensions it later assumed.

Conclusion

Rogers Brubaker et al. have powerfully argued for the ‘shift in angle of vision’ (2006: 167) stating that a focus on the ‘incendiary rhetoric’ of the political elite ‘without attending to the question of resonance or receptivity’ might be misleading (2006: 358). Similarly, this chapter has sought to shift the emphasis from a focus upon the elite level alone to a more balanced analysis of how this dimension interacts with local level dynamics. Situating the discussion within the context of Kenyan society explored in the first half of this thesis, I have argued that the political events since the 2002 elections were of crucial importance in shifting the boundaries between friend and stranger, enemy and ally, and served as an important transition period in the gradual movement towards and entrenchment of Kikuyu alienation and isolation by 2007. While the political events of this period provided elites with a wealth of material upon which to draw, ethnicised discourses of betrayal and animosity were already

circulating at the local level, and are a result of the highly ethnicised nature of society and the tendency to interpret events through an ethnic lens. Furthermore, hate speech and incitement, usually assigned to the realm of the political elites, were produced, reproduced and circulated at all levels of social agency and cannot be understood in isolation from the social context of everyday ethnic conflict from which they emerge. In fact, often the gradual intensification of hate speech and the incitement to violence goes unnoticed and unchecked at the local level, being mistaken for the typical use of negative ethnicity in day to day life. Moreover, a closer examination of local level dynamics illustrates that hate speech and incitement was far more prolific and intense in ethnicised spaces, where prejudice and bias circulate more profusely in everyday situations; conversely in ethnically mixed spaces, where outspoken ethnic prejudices are less acceptable in day to day interactions, political disagreements remained largely congenial and, more often than not, the use of stereotypes continued to be a source of humour rather than tension. Nevertheless, the interaction of top-down and bottom-up incitement and animosity during the campaign period marked a movement along the continuum of conflict, as incidents of violence increased and intensified. Finally, the chapter has suggested that the specific sequence of events served to heighten, intensify and transform feelings of hope and expectation to deep disappointment, anger and frustration, and served as a trigger for the violence which immediately followed the presidential announcement. Chapter Seven examines the local level dynamics of the violence and argues that it very quickly transforms from this form of violent protest and rioting, to a more complex interaction of different dimensions of conflict.

Chapter Seven:

The Post-Election Crisis:

A Local-Level Perspective of Ethnic Violence

Introduction

The previous chapters of this thesis have highlighted the social and political context of ethnicity and violence in Kenya, explored the political transitions towards the polarisation of 2007, and examined the ways in which the flawed elections acted as a trigger for violence, continually emphasising the importance of social structures and agency at the local level. In this chapter I focus more closely on the patterns and practices of violence, exploring the ways in which they relate to ethnicity and examining how violence was experienced and enacted during the post-election crisis. The ethnic conflict literature can often overstate the manipulative capacity of political elites at the expense of local agency, and there is a strong tendency in the broader literature on civil conflict to ‘look for the causes of violence at the regional and national levels, and not in the realm of the local’ (Autesserre 2010: 42). However, in recent years there has been increasing attention paid to more micro-level, sub-national research which addresses questions related to the locality, intensity and duration of violence, to the motivations and behaviours of individual participants in the action, and to the routines and patterns which emerge during conflict (Kalyvas and Kocher 2009: 335-336; see for example, Nordstrom 1997; Kalyvas 2003, 2006; Richards 2005; Wood 2003; Hinton 2002; Lubkemann 2005; Straus 2006; Bakonyi and De Guevara 2009). Such analyses are important, as Richards (2005: 11) points out:

War may be deeply unpleasant and dangerous, but only by stepping up close will the complex intertwining of multiple motivations become tractable to analysis. Reading a balance sheet from afar is simply no substitute for well-grounded attempts to grasp the inherent complexity of war.

In the Kenyan context, in addition to the detailed governmental reports and human rights documents relating to the post-election crisis, a number of scholarly works are emerging that highlight the importance of disaggregation and emphasise the local dimensions of, and variations in, the violence. Anderson and Lochery (2008), for example, document the geographical patterns of violence in the Rift Valley by analysing satellite imagery signalling the outbreak of fires in January 2008;¹ Murunga (2011) explores the variations in the forms of violence in different regions of the country, focusing on questions concerning the spontaneous, planned, or organised nature of conflict; Osborn (2008) and de Smedt (2009) address the dynamics of politics and violence in Kibera; Médard (2009) highlights the role of autochthonous discourses in conflicts over land; Calas (2009) offers a spatially sensitive mapping of the elections and the post-election crisis; and Lynch's (2011) in-depth study of the Kalenjin emphasises the importance of local discourses in shaping political action and behaviour.

Yet despite this increased attention to the grassroots dynamics of violence, there are few attempts to engage directly with questions of ethnicity in these local level processes, practices and violent acts.² This chapter, then, contributes to this literature by exploring the complex and ambiguous role ethnicity played in the kaleidoscope of violent action during the post-election crisis, examining not only when and where violence took place, but what forms

¹ The value of this analysis lies more in its efforts to disaggregate the patterns of violence and to draw attention to the geographical variations in its timing and intensity. While the authors draw some tentative conclusions from these images, inferring that a significant dimension of the violence was planned and orchestrated, and that historical injustices over land allocation drove much of the violence in the Rift Valley, they quite rightly point out the limitations of mapping fires in analysing the conflict. They emphasise the need to 'triangulate the evidence provided by the maps with other kinds of information' (2008: 333), and my own research, which problematises and complexifies some of their conclusions, further highlights this need.

² There are some notable exceptions including Malkki (1995) Straus (2006), and Fujii (2009a). Also worthy of note is Tronvoll's (2005) study of localised Tigrean identity formation in the Eritrean-Ethiopian war of 1998-2000, which shifts the focus from the collective to the individual, and highlights the ambiguity of ethnicity in violence. Similarly a recent article by Kalyvas (2008) offers a locally grounded account of ethnic identification processes in violence. The article is important as it addresses the tension between constructivist insights in the analysis of ethnicity and the concurrent tendency to cast ethnic groups as unitary actors in analyses of conflict. Furthermore it empirically maps the involvement of individuals in ethnic conflict in an effort to incorporate constructivist insights into the analysis of violence.

it took, who participated in it, in what ways and why. It argues that the conceptualisation of ethnic violence afforded by the dominant macro-level perspective – that it is largely organised and directed from above, and that it is fought along clearly identifiable cleavage lines between (temporarily) reified groups – is deeply misleading and obscures the processes of mobilisation on the ground, the complexity and ambiguity of participation, and the multi-vocality of ethnic identity in times of violent conflict.

The chapter begins by examining the interaction of planned, organised and spontaneous dimensions of violence, drawing attention to the ways in which bottom-up processes interacted with, infused, and operated independently from, top-down orchestration. It then explores the spatial variations in violence, demonstrating that discourses of ethnic territoriality, the embeddedness of ethnic components of the habitus, and the dynamics of local interaction significantly influence the contours of violence. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the flexibility of the friend/enemy dichotomy at the local level, revealing the logic behind its negotiation and reconceptualisation by local level actors. Thus, the chapter seeks not only to elucidate, but also to offer some explanation of the ‘messiness’ of ethnic conflict in the context of the 2007-2008 crisis.

Spontaneous, Planned and Organised Violence

Common representations of ethnic violence as the product of strategic planning, and direction by political elites for electoral purposes are echoed by some analysts of the Kenyan situation. It is explicitly stated by Klopp (2008) who argues that elites on both sides of the political divide were deliberately ‘pitting one community against another as a means to gain power,’ and implicitly noted by Branch and Cheeseman (2009: 21) who suggest that the reintroduction of multi-party politics has created ‘incentives for leaders to adopt increasingly

antagonistic strategies.’ Moreover, a KNCHR report asserts that ‘the violence was largely instigated by politicians’ (2008: 8), and the ICC has accused key political figures of being heavily involved in directing the violence, suggesting that William Ruto and Henry Kosgey planned the chaos in the Rift Valley up to a year in advance ‘to create a Kalenjin and pro-Kalenjin voting block that would serve their interests in any election’ (ICC, 2011: 8). However, despite this inclination to blame elites for initiating, orchestrating, funding and directing violence, a significant number of analyses have noted that at least some of the violence was more spontaneous in nature, and that its eruption and spread provoked more impromptu processes of organisation at the local level (Lynch 2008: 565, 2011: 206-208; Ashforth 2008: 14; Calas 2009: 177; Rutten and Owuor 2009, 321; Kagwanja 2009: 378; Murunga 2011). Thus, there is an emerging consensus that the 2007-2008 crisis was a combination of planned, organised and spontaneous dimensions,³ with each constituent part being more or less important across time and space. The CIPEV (2008: viii) report concludes that:

The post election violence was spontaneous in some geographic areas and a result of planning and organization in other areas, often with the involvement of politicians and business leaders. Some areas witnessed a combination of the two forms of violence, where what started as a spontaneous violent reaction to the perceived rigging of elections later evolved into well organized and coordinated attacks.

This section explores the different dimensions, arguing that while there were significant elements of elite organisation, funding and direction, this provides only a partial explanation of violence in some areas, and at times it can be misleading. I suggest that while premeditated elements of violence – that is violence planned by powerful leaders in advance of the elections – was largely limited to the Rift Valley region, elite organisation and instigation

³ Many accounts also identify state-sanctioned violence carried out by police and other state agents as an additional dimension (see for example Murunga 2011; Kagwanja 2009; CIPEV 2008; Human Rights Watch 2008). While I do not disagree that this constituted a distinct and important element, given this thesis’ focus upon the involvement of non-state, local level actors in conflict I do not address it here.

became increasingly widespread and prominent as the situation proceeded. However, this top-down picture is complicated by bottom-up processes of spontaneity and locally-organised responses that operated alongside it throughout the duration of the crisis. Indeed, a close-grained look at how some attacks came about, who was involved in their planning, and in what ways, points to the increasingly blurred lines between organisation and spontaneity at the grassroots.

While in Chapter Six I argued that much of the violence immediately following the presidential announcement was predominantly a spontaneous reaction to the ‘rigged’ elections, this does not preclude elements of elite mobilisation and planning. My research certainly supports the assertion that some incidents of violence in some areas might have been planned in advance of the elections. The speed, scale, nature and coordination of some of the attacks that occurred in Rift Valley within the first few days of the presidential announcement, for example, all point to premeditation and organisation. The large numbers of Kalenjin warriors reported to have descended upon Kiambaa⁴ on the morning of 1 January, less than forty-eight hours after Kibaki’s announcement, is in itself suggestive of advanced preparation. Furthermore, the fact that the attackers were well-armed with kerosene and petroleum is also a ‘useful indicator of planning or premeditation’ (Murunga 2011: 35); as one resident of Kiambaa exclaims, ‘they know what they are going to do, otherwise where would they get the petroleum?’ (JG, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret, 16 January 2010). Similarly, on the other side of Eldoret town, the attack against Huruma began on, or just after, 1 January (ICC, 2011: 21). Large numbers of perpetrators were transported to the area in trucks, surrounding the village from all sides, indicating a coordinated and systematic attack

⁴ My interviewees consistently put the number at around 3000-4000. While this number is most likely inflated, the CIPEV report and other human rights documents suggest the figures reached into the hundreds at least.

on a predetermined target.⁵ Many of the attackers were also found with large amounts of money and new mobile phones in their pockets, indicating that they were being funded and directed:⁶

I saw people coming for war with a lot of weapons because in Nyathiru⁷ up there we were defending the area. And we used to see six trucks from the hill up there, and when the truck turns you see many people coming, without fear. // In night hours some used to come from the other direction, very many of them. // But those people were being paid, because the way they look, they are not boys we know from the area. We know on that hill there are not as many Nandis as that. So we are wondering where they've come from. Some of them, we caught them and we asked them, "Are you coming from that hill?" They said no, that they were brought in a truck. Some of them came from Turbo, from interior areas. We got them with money. They were being paid 400 shillings and they used to be in a group. It was like a down payment. Once they've already done the violence, when they go back, they'd get more money (AV, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 4 February 2010).

In addition to these signs of pre-planning and premeditation in the Rift Valley, elite orchestration became increasingly prominent in other areas of the country as the violence continued, and well-organised, well-funded retaliatory attacks were almost certainly arranged and directed from above. Key politicians on the PNU side, for example, have been accused of mobilising members of the Mungiki sect, providing them with weapons and payment, and transporting them across the country to carry out systematic revenge attacks upon ODM-affiliated communities.⁸ The vast majority of my interviewees confirm the mobilisation both of the Mungiki and of Kalenjin warriors as the violence continued. One Kikuyu interviewee from Kawangware in Nairobi, who was identified as a member of Mungiki by many residents

⁵ Interviewee descriptions of the attack on Muniyaka are virtually identical. The uniformity and seeming co-ordination of these large-scale attacks is suggestive of levels of advanced planning and elite direction.

⁶ This supports the charges made by the ICC against William Ruto and Henry Kosgey that in addition to providing fuel to the perpetrators and coordinating transportation, telephones were also distributed as logistical support (ICC, 2011: 16).

⁷ Nyathiru is a motel which is situated at the edge of Huruma village, near to the main road. Its location at the border of the slum meant that the area became a prominent battleground.

⁸ The ICC has named Uhuru Kenyatta and Francis Muthaura as the principal perpetrators in the organisation of these retaliatory attacks.

of the area,⁹ explains that after the ‘massacres’ which took place upcountry, the group was mobilised to retaliate:

A group called Mungiki called a meeting and they told us to go and rescue our people in the Rift Valley. Since the group has so much money, they hired vehicles. It took around 500 people to Naivasha. When we reached in Naivasha, we put a very big roadblock in there. // We declared that any bus passing the area was to be searched, if there was a Luo on the bus he must remain in Naivasha and the bus would continue on. We cut many and we circumcised many (RH, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 14 March 2010).

Similarly, in Nakuru, residents report that Mungiki members were transported to the town in lorries and were well-armed: ‘the Kikuyu’s weapons, they were not emergency weapons, so it was planned for them to have those weapons. // All of them had bottles of petrol’ (HR, Interview, Pondamali, Nakuru, 26 June 2010). Furthermore, letters were purportedly dropped by the group in ODM territories issuing warnings that ‘today we’re coming for you’ (GB, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 20 June 2010), which, as Horowitz (2001: 228) points out, is a clear sign of forethought and organisation. Similarly, a significant number of interviewees in Eldoret and Nakuru believe that the Marakwet and Pokot communities were transported from the North to support the Kalenjin attacks. A Kikuyu woman from Munyaka, for example, explains that when the first Kalenjin group were unable to defeat the Kikuyu in the village, they sent for reinforcements from the Marakwet because ‘they’re still a Kalenjin clan. // as we were in the church, we saw a truck with a lot of people. It was full and they were Marakwets. They had arrows’ (BD, Interview, Munyaka, Eldoret, 17 February 2010). Similarly, a Kalenjin youth in Kaptembwa explains that when rumours began to circulate that the Mungiki were being mobilised to launch counter-attacks in the Nakuru area, the Pokot

⁹ RH is, unsurprisingly, more ambiguous about his status as a member of the sect. While he appears at times to disassociate himself from membership of the group, the fact that he was among those transported upcountry is suggestive of his involvement, and at the end of the interview he states, ‘if the police will kill us because they think that we’re Mungiki, let them, because we’re all Kikuyu and we’re all Mungiki.’

were called in to support the local Kalenjin community (KV, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 16 June 2010).

In addition to these acts of large-scale, country-wide coordination there is strong evidence to suggest that politicians also became involved at a more local level, funding and offering incentives to the more amorphous youth groups and gangs, encouraging them to continue fighting. In Mathare, for example, one interviewee recalls that ‘some councillors // came walking around here giving out money to the youth, telling them to continue with the war and some were buying the machetes for the youths’ (SGH, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 13 April 2010); a large number of interviewees in Kawangware reported that Beth Mugo, the incumbent MP, was heavily involved in a meeting which took place in the Ndarura school grounds, claiming that she gave the youths money and weapons to engage in retaliatory attacks on the Luo and Luhya communities; and residents of Kibera reported that ‘we saw a big politician come and give money to the boys blocking the road’ (JHG, Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 15 November 2009). Indeed, some participants in the violence admitted that ‘at that time we got money very easily’ (ED in GWH, Group Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 20 November 2009). However, these elements of later-stage organisation, funding and direction appear to be the result of politicians responding to, and capitalising upon, the violence that had already erupted. They were not necessarily, or indeed primarily, the ‘instigators’ of the clashes in most areas, but they certainly contributed to its transformation into a more organised, directed and coordinated affair, and perpetuated it through the provision of incentives and rewards. However, while it is tempting to infer a certain linearity in the temporal patterns of violence from these observations – that there was a general shift from spontaneity to organisation – this oversimplifies the more complex infusion and interaction of top-down organisation and bottom-up dynamics of the conflict.

Thus, while it is important not to understate the involvement of political elites in orchestrating some dimensions of the post-election crisis in some places, other more localised processes of organisation were equally prevalent, if not more so. These operated at various different levels of the local community, and to varying degrees, ranging from mid-level coordination of the youth by local ‘big-men,’ to more amorphous, impromptu plans for small-scale attacks on the part of groups and gangs in the area. In the case of the former, village elders, chiefs, businessmen, councillors and landlords played a significant role in mobilising the local youth, initiating meetings and leading discussions over responses to the ongoing crisis. Lynch (2008: 565) similarly identifies the importance of this dimension of organisation, stating:

In many areas an initially spontaneous reaction against a ‘rigged election’ also initiated community discussions on how to respond and more *ad hoc* processes of incitement and organization by local actors, including elders and local ODM councillor and campaign organizers.

For example, a Luo interviewee from 4B suggests that an elder in the village was the ‘chief organiser’ of the youth, arranging them into groups to carry out attacks (PT, Interview 4B, Mathare, 2 May 2010). Similarly, in Kaptembwa a large number of interviewees recall that there were a number of meetings organised by the Kalenjin village elders in which they ‘told us how we will fight our enemy and protect ourselves’ (KV, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 16 June 2010). One Kalenjin youth states that:

With the Kipsigis, the Kalenjin down here, you can’t just start a war without it being organised by the old men, to give that blessing. So a Kalenjin was killed in Catholic church¹⁰ on the way home from his job, so then the old men called the young men. I was in that meeting, as a young man you must go there // There is a river down there where we meet and the old men talk, “how should we react?” We were told that someone of our tribe was killed so we can’t just sit there watching, our community must do something (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010).

¹⁰ The interviewee is referring to an area of the road between Shabab and Kaptembwa where there is a Catholic church. He does not mean that the Kalenjin was killed in the church itself.

Furthermore, many interviewees explain that following the outbreak of violence, property owners, landlords and ‘the rich people with businesses’ (S, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 14 January 2010), were also involved in inciting, mobilising and organising the youth to fight in order to defend and protect their assets. In Kawangware, for example, Kikuyu landlords are reported to have been heavily involved in initiating a meeting, mobilising the strong Mungiki presence in the area, and funding the youth to fight ODM-affiliated communities who were rioting and destroying Kikuyu properties.¹¹ A youth from the area recalls that it was the destruction of Kikuyu properties in the 56, Muslim and Stage 2 areas of Kawangware that prompted this local level organisation:

After this, it fuelled the war and the landlords and Kikuyu decided to reinforce, and they called for backup from Kikuyu [*a town on the outskirts of Nairobi*] and Ndonyo and Waithaka, from where most of the youths there are Mungiki. So they had a meeting at the grounds there called Ndarura’ (B, Interview, Kobi, Kawangware, 1 March 2010).

At this meeting ‘money was raised by the businessmen and the landlords, and we bought pangas, *rungus*, guns // so we were to go to Congo to rescue the fellow Kikuyu, the landlords in that area’ (B, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 5 March 2010). The involvement of the more wealthy sectors of the community in financing the conflict is noted in areas across the country. Interviewees in Mathare, for example, suggested that ‘those rich Luos // bribed the youth with money so the youth went to war’ (SGH, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 13 April 2010), and in Eldoret some suggested that ‘The business people used to pay the warriors. They were paid to go and watch their places’ (KNB, Group Interview with Kisumu Ndogo youths, Langas, Eldoret, 17 January 2010). One interviewee in Kawangware suggests that, ‘An Indian, he paid the youths to attack the other businesses that gave him competition, so

¹¹ This is the same meeting mentioned above in which Beth Mugo allegedly played a prominent role. There is some debate amongst interviewees as to who initiated the meeting, the landlords or the MP, but a significant majority claim that it was the former who called the meeting, and the MP’s involvement was largely as a financier.

they attacked all those businesses.’ In Huruma, some interviewees believe that a former land owner in the area funded some of the Kalenjin attackers in the hopes of benefitting financially:

Those who we caught, we got information [from them] that the hill up there belongs to one Nandi man. That is the garden of one man. And he sold it to mostly Kikuyu and Kisiis. We heard that that man went to the bank to take loans towards 800,000, 900,000 and he was told “use money to get money.” So he took the loan and he came and gave it to the youth to chase those Kikuyu and Kisii from that hill so that he can sell the land again. Because the people who bought the land before bought it at 40,000 to 60,000 per plot so they want to chase them to sell the land again (AV, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 4 February 2010).¹²

The involvement of local businessmen in mobilising, inciting and funding the youth is not only indicative of bottom-up elements of organisation, but it also highlights the importance of individual and local agendas in perpetuating the violence.

In addition to these structured processes of organisation, a large number of interviewees described more organic discussions and plans to carry out acts of violence that seem to straddle the line between spontaneity and some degree of organisation. A Luo youth from Mathare, for example, states, ‘I found a group of youth planning how they will raid the Kikuyu who are still here. I joined them and we went, we took their goats and ducks and we raided their shops around’ (FO, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 8 May 2010). In Nakuru a Luhya interviewee recalls, ‘I saw a group of Kalenjin youth saying, “Tomorrow we’ll go in Pondamali, there is where many Luos have been killed”’ (FS, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010). Similarly, Kikuyu residents of Kosovo in Mathare explain that they coordinated with youths in neighbouring areas in order to prevent the Luo from passing along Juja road on their way to Uhuru Park:

¹² The veracity of this story is highly questionable given my inability to triangulate it with data collected from the Kalenjin youth in the area. However, this interviewee’s belief in its credibility, as well as that of others in Huruma, in conjunction with other stories illustrating the involvement of businessmen, land owners, and property owners in pursuing their own agendas during the violence, are all indicative of the involvement of such individuals as organisers and financiers.

That next day Raila called for a mass demonstration at Uhuru Park, they were supposed to go there, so that day we saw them in large numbers going to Uhuru Park using Juja road // So the Kikuyus organised a gang and we communicated with the youth from Mlango Kubwa. // we hijacked them here. // Those who escaped along the road, while they were escaping they came across the boys from Mlango and they attacked them there. So they realised that Juja road is a Kikuyu zone (B, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 12 April 2010).¹³

Similarly, in Huruma, Eldoret, a Kikuyu youth recalls the plans to launch a counter-attack upon the neighbouring Kalenjin village:

We as the youth sat down and we said, “No, they cannot go like that with our things.” Because they had looted all our things, anything nice from the houses. So we sit, a group of boys, to discuss the issue. At that time, we say we can’t wait for them as they go with properties // so we went up there and all the things they had stolen, they had put it in one place there. We start removing the things from the house. It took us like thirty minutes (YRH, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 4 February 2010).¹⁴

These discussions took place at common youth ‘hangouts,’ such as on street corners, at newspaper stands, in pubs, youth bases and at other such meeting points. For example, in Kawangware residents met outside a supermarket in 56 and from there they ‘planned how to do what we were going to do // [because] that is where the newspapers are sold. So people went to look at the newspapers, so the Luos, the Luhyas, it is their meeting point’ (CM, Interview, 56, Kawangware, 7 March 2010). The fact that these discussions of how to respond to ongoing events took place in a largely organic fashion, in common hangout spots and bases, further illustrates that highly organised and centralised ethnic militias attached to politicians were not necessarily the key perpetrators of the violence, as might have been the case in previous clashes in the country. Rather, violent acts were more often carried out by amorphous groups of youth, lacking a distinct and stable leadership element. Thus, violent

¹³ Note the reference to ethnically territorialised and bordered space: that Juja road is part of the ‘Kikuyu zone.’ The politico-ethnic homogenisation of space and the subsequent patrolling of boundaries was a key characteristic of the violence across the country.

¹⁴ This incident was related to me by a number of interviewees in Huruma. Over thirty members of the group were arrested when they were caught by the GSU and the incident was reported in *The Standard* (9 February 2008). The article states that over fifty youths were involved in the attack, and characterises it as a ‘revenge mission’ in which the youth were not only looting livestock and property, but were also harassing women and children, burning houses and searching for particular individuals, presumably those known to have been involved in attacks upon Huruma estate.

acts of the post-election crisis were often haphazardly planned and extemporaneously carried out by groups of friends and neighbours meeting, reacting to, and taking advantage of the situation, supporting Horowitz's (2001: 225) suggestion that often ethnic violence is, in part, 'organised by ephemeral leadership that springs up to respond to events as they happen.'

Amidst these various levels and degrees of organisation, both macro- and micro-level events continued to trigger renewed waves of spontaneous protest and rioting throughout the crisis. Kibaki's announcement of a partial Cabinet on 8 January, for example, unexpected as it was in the absence of a negotiated settlement, sparked fresh waves of violence across the country (*Daily Nation*, 9 January 2008; *The Standard*, 10 January 2008) and interviewees in Mathare recalled that 'at that time when things were cooling, we heard that Kalonzo was made the Vice President, and now the war was between the Kambas and the Luos' (CS, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 18 May 2010).¹⁵ Similarly, the killing of an MP, Mellitus Mugabe Were, in Woodley Estate in the early hours of 29 January sparked renewed chaos in Nairobi (KNCHR 2008: 42; *The Standard*, 30 January 2008) and the death of an Eldoret MP, David Kimutai Too, less than two days later, triggered further violent protests in Rift Valley and Western Kenya (*The Standard*, 1 February 2008; CIPEV 2008: 144). Moreover, throughout the crisis reports of attacks upon co-ethnics sparked violent reprisals across the country and provoked more active and intense participation amongst local level actors. As one interviewee states:

We heard that the Luo and Luhya in Central, Naivasha, Limuru were evicted and beaten up, some houses were burned. When we got the message that our people were evicted from Kikuyu areas we were furious and I was very angry. I called my people in Western and I told them "Evict any Kikuyu in our area!" // and now I got mad and I was like an animal. I had my panga twenty-four-seven, walking around the plot (SSB, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 15 March 2010).

¹⁵ CS implies that prior to this incident, Kambas in the area had not been targeted. This not only points to the speed with which ethnic alliances and animosities can shift, and their inherent instability, but it also draws attention to the variations in ethnicised violence across time and space. This issue is further discussed later in the chapter.

Thus, the instability of the political situation, and the violent events that were spreading across the country, fed into localised dynamics of violence. These responses illustrate the importance of local level agency, drawing attention to the continued prevalence of mass-led elements of violence throughout the crisis. Bottom-up, largely spontaneous reactions to ongoing events continued for the duration of the conflict and, as Horowitz (2001: 225) points out, ‘there remains room, even in the most organized riots, for spontaneous action.’

Thus, there was a certain duality to the Kenyan violence, where bottom-up processes of violence and organisation both interacted with, and operated independently from, more top-down direction and coordination in a continually transforming infusion. As such we should caution against focusing solely, or indeed even primarily, upon the level of the political elite. As one interview states, ‘People like blaming the leaders, but we must give credit where it is due’ (K, Interview, Olympic, Kibera, 4 December 2009), and sometimes this lies in the realm of the local arena. The remainder of the chapter explores the practices of violence which characterised this web of planned, organised and spontaneous conflict, suggesting that socio-spatial structures and local agency arguably have more of an impact in shaping the contours of violence than the involvement of elite actors.

Ethnicity and the Socio-Spatial Dynamics of Violence

In Eldoret, the people who suffered there were the Kikuyu and the Kamba and the Kisii, because the Kalenjin are the majority, and others are the minority. And in Kisumu, the Luo are the majority and the Kikuyu are very few, so something like that can easily happen there. So the places where the tribes are the majority and others are the minority is where there was war. // that is where things are hard, in places like that (JF, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 17 June 2010).

In this interview, JF highlights the socio-spatial variations which characterised the post-election violence, and his suggestion that it is the majority/minority dynamics which are

responsible for shaping these variations, whilst somewhat simplified, is not wholly inaccurate. Spaces dominated by a particular group, that is spaces which are ostensibly ethnicised, did experience more immediate and more intense violence than ethnically mixed territories. The latter on the whole, either remained relatively calm for the duration of the crisis, or only descended into violence after a significant delay. The first waves of violence erupted in core ODM zones across the country, as the few PNU-affiliated residents were targeted and the spaces subjected to violent politico-ethnic homogenisation. The violence quickly spread outwards from these territories as attacks were launched against neighbouring areas, frontier zones and nearby ethnic enclaves, and fighting became concentrated at the increasingly reified borderlines and boundaries. This pattern is apparent in both the peri-urban arena, where villages are spread out and have relatively clearly defined borders, as well as in the more geographically-concentrated, and often less distinctly-bounded neighbourhoods of urban slums. In Eldoret, for example, residents of the villages of Kiambaa, Huruma and Munyaka recall that when the violence began they saw smoke coming from the ‘interior’ rural Kalenjin areas¹⁶ and that Kikuyu residents were fleeing these villages as attackers burned their homes to the ground. Shortly after this, large-scale attacks were launched upon their own estates. An account given by a Kikuyu man, DAB, who was resident in a small Kalenjin-dominated village on the outskirts of Eldoret in 2007 clearly illustrates this pattern. He recalls that on 29 December, as the presidential announcement was delayed amidst suspicions of rigging, he heard his neighbours grouping together and organising themselves to come and attack his home; as one of the few Kikuyu living in the village, he was the first to be targeted. He fled to the neighbouring Kikuyu enclave of Huruma, where the residents were celebrating, unaware that violence was erupting elsewhere, until they saw

¹⁶ Interestingly, a large number of interviewees referred to the rural areas of Rift Valley as ‘interior Kalenjin zones’, highlighting this sense of core areas which are indisputably dominated by one community.

smoke billowing from the rural areas. The next day, Huruma was attacked in a highly organised, systematic and coordinated manner.¹⁷ Similarly, residents of Mathare explain that the Kikuyu living in the centre of Luo-dominated 4B were the first to be attacked, and the violence quickly spread to Gitathuru, a frontier zone which borders with Kosovo and which has a significant Kikuyu minority, as ‘the Luo were coming from Muradi towards this area // saying that they’ll come from their village to stay in Kosovo and chase the Kikuyu from here’ (MSO, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 14 April 2010). In Kibera, residents of Kianda recall that the violence began in the Luo stronghold of Gatuikera, and spread as the youths ‘were coming from Gatuikera and coming to 42,¹⁸ burning something and going back. The group was large and when they came here some of the boys joined them’ (CM, Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 21 November 2009). After this, inter-communal violence was largely concentrated along the border of Kikuyu-dominated Laini Saba.¹⁹ Thus, violence spread outwards from core ODM areas, through more peripheral frontier zones, as ethnicised neighbourhoods and villages were ‘cleansed’ of PNU minorities, and enclaves were subsequently attacked in an effort to claim, or in some cases to ‘reclaim,’ space.

¹⁷DAB suggests that violence erupted in his village prior to the presidential announcement. While Anderson and Lochery (2008: 333) suggest that such incidents are signs of advanced planning, and illustrate that violence would likely have occurred regardless of the result, DAB’s description of the violence on this particular day gives little indication of prior organisation and coordination; the way in which he was attacked appears to be a reaction to the flawed counting process by local people who knew both his name, and where he lived. His account of the violence that took place the next day, after he had run away to his family in Huruma, however, does indicate signs of planning and organisation. It is also possible that DAB is mistaken over the date in which violence erupted. He suggests that when he reached Huruma, the residents there were celebrating by slaughtering a sheep, drinking and eating chapatti. It seems unlikely that the Kikuyu would have been celebrating so exuberantly if Kibaki had not yet been announced. It is possible that they were celebrating the fact that Kibaki had taken the lead but given the narrow margin of his lead on 29 December and the ongoing disputes over the counting process, I am not wholly convinced by this and think it more likely that violence began in DAB’s village on 30 December. This would also correspond with the ICC’s supposition that the attack on Huruma began on 1 January, or shortly thereafter, rather than on 30 December, as DAB suggests.

¹⁸ 42 is a matatu stage in Kianda, but it is often used to refer to the neighbourhood as a whole.

¹⁹ However, fighting between the youth and the police continued in various areas of the slum, as did the looting of shops and businesses. One interviewee suggests that with the exception of Laini Saba, ‘from there in Kibera there were no Kikuyu, it was just ODM. From there I came back home just to protect the area. There were rumours of Mungiki coming but the killings stopped in Kibera on the third [of January]. People were just fighting the police from there’ (FZ, Interview, Makina, 3 August 2010).

On the other hand, in contrast to the intense violence which characterised ethnicised spaces, ethnically mixed territories remained relatively calm or experienced a significant delay in the eruption of violence; this is evident both in the micro-territories of urban slums, as well as at a larger scale in the case of Nakuru town. In the former, residents of Nigeria in Mathare and Kobiwo in Kawangware, for example, reported that their areas remained peaceful throughout the crisis, ‘because it is mixed up ethnically’ (J, Interview, Kobiwo, Kawangware, 3 March 2010), stating that, ‘there was no saga here because we live many tribes, not just one tribe. We were surrounded by war, but it was cool here’ (K, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 19 May 2010). Similarly, residents of Kenya Service in Eldoret explained that ‘there was no tension at all between the tribes in Kenya Service’ (CK, Interview, Kenya Service, Eldoret, 13 February 2010), despite the intense violence which consumed neighbouring Munyaka. Interviewees told me that they united during the violence, cooperating with members of ‘rival’ groups to protect and defend the area:²⁰

They have been our neighbours living here a very long time. Here our elders in this community called everyone and told us, ‘You are not a Luo, or a Nandi or a Kikuyu anymore. We are Kenyans. We must come together to take care of our community (C, Interview, Kenya Service, Eldoret, 12 February 2010).

On a larger scale, Nakuru town,²¹ while experiencing some isolated rioting and violent protest on the night of the presidential announcement, quickly cooled to a relative, if uneasy, calm that continued until 24 January.²² It is the ethnic heterogeneity of the area and the

²⁰ The complexification of the macro-ethnic cleavage and the circumstances under which it occurs is further explored in the following section.

²¹ The shifting demographics of Nakuru have been highlighted in Chapter Three, and while the Kikuyu are now believed to constitute the majority, they are by no means dominant in the area. As one interviewee states, ‘Nakuru is a cosmopolitan town, with many tribes. You can’t say that a particular party has an advantage over another. It is not like in Western where it is the Luhyas who are allied to a party’ (FG, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 1 June 2010).

²² Nevertheless, while there were few incidents of violence in Nakuru during this time, tensions were certainly enveloping the town as the country descended further into violence. The influx of IDPs and the persistent rumours of the imminent arrival of Kalenjin warriors and Mungiki further heightened inter-ethnic tensions in the town (CIPEV 2008: 98). A number of interviewees noted that these tensions erupted into widespread chaos following the killing of a Kalenjin man on 24 January, a view which is supported by the CIPEV report (2008: 102).

prevalence of long-standing cross-cutting ties that many interviewees point to as the reason for the significant delay in the outbreak of intense and extensive violence in the town. This section, then, explores these socio-spatial variations in violence dynamics, arguing that they are, in part, shaped by the culturally embedded discourses of ethnic territoriality which underpin Kenyan politics and society, as well as by the ethnic components of the habitus, and by the constraining nature of relations within ethnically homogenised spaces.

The autochthonous discourses and exclusionary citizenship narratives that characterise Kenyan society, both at the macro-regional level, and in the urban micro-territorial arena, have been highlighted throughout this thesis. The designation of ethnic others as guests, and the subordinate citizenship status to which they are subjected, became increasingly overt and tense during the 2007 campaigns as dominant communities policed their areas. Here I argue that much of the violence which marred the country after the elections can be understood as a performance of this ‘deep cultural grammar’ (Johnston 2008: 322), and a violent expression of the immigrant-guest narrative (Jenkins 2012);²³ as such it is perhaps unsurprising that ethnically mixed spaces, where a sense of ethnic territoriality and ownership is conspicuously absent, did not encounter the same levels of intensity or the same characteristics of violence.

The discourse that minorities should either conform to the political wishes of the host community or return to their own territories, not only dominated the campaigns, but persisted throughout the crisis. Acts of violence were punctuated by territorialised identity narratives as spaces were homogenised, borderlines were marked, patrolled and policed, and residents became acutely aware that ‘you have to watch which territory you are in’ (SIL, Interview, Woodley, Nairobi, 22 November 2009). Indeed, the post-election crisis was more about asserting or reasserting dominance and control over space, and punishing opposing

²³ The following paragraphs draw heavily upon the arguments laid out in Jenkins (2012).

communities for their perceived transgressions and persistent abuses of hospitality, than it was about killing or eliminating them. Consequently, the violence was characterised largely by the burning of minorities' houses, businesses and other properties, and while the killings and deaths were numerous, they remain relatively low in comparison to the numbers of displaced persons.²⁴ Revealingly, in some cases minorities were even given time to vacate the area before they were violently evicted. For example, one interviewee who was living in Gatuikera, Kibera states that, 'they told me if I want to live, leave your things and go' (KN, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 22 December 2009) and another recalls that, 'seven people came in the morning and told my mother that by 4pm she should not be here, she should leave and go if she wanted to save her life' (JHG, Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 15 November 2009). In Coastal Province leaflets were reportedly distributed by the Kaya Revolution Council stating:

We are giving you 72 hours to leave. Get your vehicles out of here before this time runs out. Or your blood and ashes of your property will be poured (KNCHR 2008: 106).

Similarly, when violence erupted in Nakuru there were intra-community debates regarding the expulsion of minorities from the various neighbourhoods, with some residents suggesting, "Give them till morning, if they won't go then, we will chase them." We gave them until morning. Some of them with land and plots were still around so we started to go to them' (ENG, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 16 June 2010). Thus, the violence was not framed by a widespread desire to kill, but rather by the intention to remove unwelcome occupiers from the area, to push them back to their own territories, and to bring about the balkanisation of the country, underscored by the sentiment that 'we must remain here alone in our home.' (DK, Interview, Kenya Service, Eldoret, 13 February 2010). One interviewee surmises, then, that

²⁴ While there is a great deal of dispute over the statistics, it is widely accepted that over 1000 people lost their lives in the postelection violence, and somewhere between 350,000 and 650,000 were displaced.

violent acts were ‘not to kill people, but to harass people, to burn their houses so that they can go and not come back again’ (ND, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret, 16 January 2010).

Furthermore, as has already been illustrated in Chapter Four, there is a strong sense that economic resources associated with particular territories ‘belong’ to the dominant community, and that immigrants have unfairly appropriated these resources. Thus, by extension, the violent homogenisation of territory which marked the post-election crisis was not only an attempt to punish and evict politically unsupportive minorities, but it was also an attempt to claim or reclaim ownership of the economic resources and activities of the area. Consequently, businesses were targeted in addition to residential structures. In Kibera, for example, the long row of Kikuyu businesses in Olympic were set alight on the night of the announcement, Citihippa buses which entered the slum were burned, and Toi Market, a haven for Kikuyu vendors, was razed to the ground. Similarly, in Kisumu, hotels, markets, and kiosks, as well as large businesses such as the Ndugu Transport Company Ltd were targeted for their ‘association with people from non-Luo communities’²⁵ (KNCHR 2008: 96), and in Nakuru, Kikomba market was looted and burned because ‘that market belonged to a Kikuyu who built it in an ODM zone since before’ (FS, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010). Whilst many structures were destroyed in a dual process of punishment and eviction, in others they were appropriated by the ‘host’ community as a resource that ‘rightfully’ belongs to them. In the slums of Nairobi, for example, many Luo and Luhya moved into and took over Kikuyu houses and now ‘most Kikuyu houses have gone. The Luo have taken them and now they stay there and they don’t pay for them’ (J, Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 28 October 2009); it was unacceptable that a minority community should have such economic dominance in the area. As one resident of Kibera surmises:

²⁵ While the company was owned by members of the Asian community, the manager was believed to be a Meru, and the company reportedly employed a significant number of non-Luo communities.

When they [the Luo] see that they are the majority, they think that they can rule.// There are so many here but they don't have houses here.// In Kibera, in Gatuikera, those people there are Luos, as before it was their area, they captured it. But the houses are not for them, they are Kikuyu and Nubian. They were captured by force (FR, Interview, Bombolulu, Kibera, 16 December 2009).

Similarly, a group of youths who were actively involved in the violence conceded that, 'We thought "let us beat up the Kikuyu for them to run away to leave for us their businesses"' (M in GWH, Group Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 20 November 2009). Many Kalenjin were accused of participating in the violence in order to secure land in the Province, because they 'say that this land was theirs and we took their land // they used to call us black whites, *Wazungu weuse*, holding land which doesn't belong to us' (JG, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret, 16 January 2010). Thus, many incidents and acts were overt expressions of the cultural violence that underscores ethnicised spaces, and the strong resentments that minorities own and control the resources that 'belong' to the dominant community. Indeed, a number of interviewees suggested that violence against the Kikuyu was particularly intense 'because the Kikuyu are the owners here, and the other tribes are renting' (YTS, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 25 January 2010), and because other communities 'they just come here to work, but the Kikuyu come here to live here forever, to migrate' (BWT, Interview, Munyaka, Eldoret, 15 February 2010).

These fears concerning the permanency of occupation are not only related to material and instrumental claims over territory, but they are also linked to the threat immigrant communities pose to the more affective, cultural and symbolic attachments to space. Indeed, the targeting of certain churches associated with particular communities can be understood as a cleansing of culturally-alien institutions within the space. One interviewee in Kibera suggests, for example, that the AIC church on Kibera Drive was burned 'because it has a board saying that there were Kikuyu services' (AB, Interview, Karanja, Kibera, 13 December 2009). Moreover, the fear that guests will alter the cultural identity of the land and challenge

native claims is apparent in framings of the selective nature of violent acts. For example, one interviewee states that the Kisii were targeted because:

The Kisii are starting to dominate in a Kalenjin area and the Kalenjin are focusing that in a short time the Kisii will be the majority here, so they took the advantage. Then they believe that the Kisii are in witchcraft, so later on they will bring their witchcraft in the area, when they are the majority (JO, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 14 June 2010).

This understanding of the rationale underscoring the violence is also visible in the invectives that accompanied some of the attacks. Residents in Munyaka and Kiambaa in Eldoret claim that Kalenjin warriors were declaring that they would not only raze the villages to the ground and re-appropriate the space, but they also emphasised that they would rename it with an appropriate Kalenjin name, exclaiming ‘Why have you come from Central to bring Central names here?’ as they attacked (JKM, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret, 20 January 2010).

We heard war cries, they came from all corners and they said they wanted to clear Munyaka to be a wheat farm, and they wanted to name it after the athletics runner Sang,²⁶ to rename the Munyaka name (F, Interview, Munyaka, Eldoret, 15 February 2010).

Furthermore, anger and resentments over the perceived superiority displayed by immigrants in areas that do not belong to them was evident in various acts of violence. One Kikuyu interviewee living in Nakuru recalls, ‘I was lying on the ground and a soldier stood over me, “These people think that they can run the province, we’ll show them they’re nothing. They are just toilets”’ (DM, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 14 June 2010); similarly a resident of Satellite in Kawangware suggests that violence erupted when Kikuyu businessmen ‘went to a group of locals started bragging, “We’ll always lead you.’ So when these people started telling the natives of the land, “We’re still in government and we’ll always lead you,” that’s

²⁶ Sang was a successful Kenyan athlete who was killed during the post-election violence. Many residents in Munyaka claim that he played a key role in leading and financing the attack on their village.

when they started breaking shops' (D, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 20 March 2010).²⁷

Thus, through the post-election violence majority communities sought to assert and to reassert their dominance over space, both materially and symbolically, and to punish minority communities for failing to respect the rules of hospitality which are perceived to govern the territory. In ethnically mixed territories on the other hand, there are no obvious claims of entitlement to the economic activity, or the cultural identity of the space, and as such there are no 'secondary citizens'; members of all communities are recognised as having an equal right to conduct business in the area, and expectations of political conformity are markedly absent. The punishment of ethnic others for persistent abuses of hospitality, which culminated in the support of an unfavourable candidate in the 2007 elections, was not a feature of the post-election environment in these spaces. Thus, in identifying the immigrant-guest narrative as the overarching framework for violence across the country, the pockets of calm in the midst of chaos become more explicable.²⁸

The importance of socio-spatial dynamics in inculcating and reinforcing ethnic components of the habitus, in shaping particular perspectives, responses and behaviours, and in facilitating the spread and perpetuation of ethnic tensions has been stressed throughout this thesis, and these processes certainly influenced local violence dynamics. Interactions with, and indeed observations of, co-ethnics and their responses to the crisis served not only to

²⁷ It is interesting to note here that D refers to the Luhya as the 'natives' of Satellite. This further demonstrates the extension of autochthonous discourses into the urban arena, and supports the argument made in Chapter Three that numerical *dominance* over space should be added to Lonsdale's (2008: 306) three idioms of *understanding*, *controlling* and *working* land, when conceptualising how claims to land entitlement and land are expressed in Kenya.

²⁸ Though Nakuru complexifies this due to its ambiguous and contested status with regards to ethnic dominance and territoriality. While there are territories in which certain communities dominate in the town, most also accommodate significant numbers of other communities. Moreover, the dominance of the Kikuyu in the town as a whole, while marginal, still challenges Kalenjin claims that Nakuru is part of their ancestral homeland. Thus, a clear sense of entitlement to, and belonging in, the space is not as evident as it is elsewhere. This, at least in part, might explain the delay in the onset of violence. When widespread violence did erupt, it was marked by narratives that illustrate the ambiguous and contested status of the town. Kalenjin attackers were claiming, 'Naivasha, that is where the last Kikuyu should stand' (NFF, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 6 June 2010), whilst the Kikuyu were claiming that 'all Kalenjin would have to go back to Kericho, that we must vacate Nakuru' (DM, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 14 June 2010).

reinforce ethnicised perspectives of the situation and feelings of anger, hatred and fear, but also to legitimise violent action. One Luo interviewee, for example, states that, ‘I thought it was just me who was angry, but I came outside and I saw that it was all Kenyans who were angry’ (EO, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 15 May 2010), and another recalls, ‘I got very angry. My fellow people in the village were chasing the Kikuyu and if they see a Kikuyu they would beat them, so I joined them and we started to fight them’ (FO, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 8 May 2010). Both interviewees here indicate, then, that their own frustrations with the flawed election were affirmed by the reactions of other residents in the area, and they subsequently joined in the protests and rioting. Indeed, some suggest that upon seeing a large crowd protesting and walking around the area, they themselves felt inclined to participate: ‘I joined the crowd and then it was like “*Haki yetu!*” // I don’t know where they are going, I joined them not knowing where we were going’ (FZ, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 3 August 2010); similarly, ‘You know there was that heat there, you know young boys like us, you see that fight and you want to experience it’ (AF, Interview, Muniyaka, Eldoret, 18 February 2010). The visibility of mass action by co-ethnics served to heighten the sense of ethnic commonality and invoked a sense of obligation to defend the rights of the community and to respond to the emerging crisis. Just as demonstrative practices of ethnicity can serve to strengthen and maintain the salience of ethnicity in times of relative calm – as has been illustrated in Chapter Three – the visibility of ethnicised responses to the flawed elections and the ongoing violence tapped into people’s predisposed sense of ethnic pride, duty and solidarity. A resident of Kikuyu-dominated Langalanga for example, states:

As we talked a group of Kikuyu youth passed our place, singing and holding bows and arrows, pangas, *rungus*, with shields, singing war songs like, “Today we want to know whether Kenya belongs to the Kalenjin or the Luo or to the Kikuyu.” // So those people passing were singing saying that // “You, you are putting boundaries, but we say that the whole of Kenya belongs to the Kikuyu.” And every Kikuyu in the area was told to rise up and defend their country, their rights, their land, their farms and their family, what our forefathers left, because there is no way that it can be taken

from us, it is for us to defend it. // We passed through bodies of dead people. I myself with my head tied with a bandage // I wanted to see what was going on, and I was going to defend my people. I couldn't stay in the house because I'm the child of heroes²⁹ (JK, Interview, Langalanga, Nakuru, 7 June 2010).

Thus, the activities and discourses enacted by large numbers of the community within ethnicised spaces resonated with other residents who similarly felt the desire to express their discontent with the situation and to support the community. As a resident of Mathare states, 'People just walk out and, "Let us do this," you can feel in your body, "I am supposed to do this." It was for everybody' (B, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 2 May 2010).

Furthermore, as events were discussed and stories relating the suffering of co-ethnics at the hands of other communities circulated, feelings of anger and hatred intensified. Indeed, the fact that the majority of IDPs fled to areas where their own community constituted the majority only accentuated this process. A Kikuyu youth living in Pondamali recalls that as the violence raged across the country, both he, and other residents of his area noted that, 'this is serious, our people can't be tortured there while we stay with them here' (LF, Interview, Pondamali, Nakuru, 22 June 2010). Similarly, a Kikuyu youth who fled his home in Eldoret and managed to reach Kayole, where 'things were good', recalls:³⁰

They asked how things were there in Eldoret. I told them how the Kalenjin and the Luo were killing Kikuyu there and I didn't know that they were getting angry with the story. So my uncle used to meet in a liquor place and he talked with Kikuyu there. When it reached night I saw them coming with a box of knives and I wondered what they were for. I heard them say that "This knife, we must use it to circumcise the Luo here' (BH, Interview, Kenya Service, Eldoret, 12 February 2010).

And a resident of Shabab in Nakuru states:

People started coming from Eldoret, Molo, Eldama Ravine, so we were the ones who welcomed them here in Nakuru. // We saw children with arrows, women with bad injuries telling us, "I was spared but my son was killed." So the thing came into our

²⁹ JK here refers to the Kikuyu heroes of the Mau Mau rebellion.

³⁰ While BH emphasises that in his area of Kenya Service things remained relatively cool, and that the different communities living there united to defend their area, rumours that the Kalenjin were 'going to poison the water' or that 'they were coming at midnight' led him to flee to his family in Kayole.

hearts, “Why are these people doing this?” (ND, Interview, Ronda, Nakuru, 9 June 2010).

Thus, intra-ethnic interaction and the visibility of suffering heightens the salience of ethnicity and strengthens the inclination to react to the injustices committed against the community; as a result, violence and the impetus to participate in it, spreads more rapidly in ethnicised areas.

Nevertheless, whilst for some individuals participation in violence was prompted by a sense of solidarity with, and duty to the community, intra-community policing and the disciplining of behaviour was crucial to constraining resistance in ethnicised spaces, accounting for some levels of participation in the violence. The nature of this policing closely resembles that of the campaigns (see Chapter Five), as coercive mobilisation operated in varying degrees with some pressures being invoked by light admonishments and subtle appeals to ethnic identity, and others by more explicit threats of punishment for non-conformity and non-participation. In the case of the former, for example, one interviewee recalls:

There is a mother, I think she must have been in her mid-thirties, she said to the boys, “You are just sitting down and your people are being beaten on the other side, and you are staying here, but the work there is continuing!” So she provoked them, “When the job continues there, to us here, let the job start” (BTS, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 14 April 2010).³¹

Similarly, a Kikuyu interviewee from Waithaka states that ‘someone spoke in Kikuyu to me saying, “The country is divided and you are just standing here?!” I was given a stick and we walked to Kawangware. // we fought many people and we tried to chase them’ (HE, Interview, Waithaka, 15 March 2010). A number of interviewees also suggest that they pre-empted such reproofs and questioning over their lack of involvement because ‘people in our own community not wanting to fight, they would be seen as a traitor’ (WL, Interview,

³¹ The mother here is playing upon the PNU campaign slogan, *Kazi iendelee*, ‘let the work continue.’ During the violence, perpetrators across the country taunted members of the Kikuyu community by distorting and repeating phrases along these lines. Many interviewees in Eldoret and Nakuru, for example, recall that when they sought assistance from the police they were told, ‘you said *kazi iendelee*, so *kazi iendelee*’, carrying the implicit meaning, ‘let the violence [the work] continue.’

Langas, Eldoret, 15 January 2010). Indeed, some suggested that questions over their loyalty to the community prompted them to participate more actively in an effort to dispel any doubts. Significant reservations and uncertainties were raised amongst the Luo community in 4B over JAK, for example, a Luo youth who was not only married to a Kikuyu, but who also spent a significant portion of his time playing football and socialising with members of the Kikuyu community in a neighbouring enclave. In the early stages of the chaos, JAK watched as the youths looted his father-in-law's home and continued 'doing many wicked things. // It came a time when they asked me, "Why aren't you joining us? Have you been sent with Mungiki so they can know our plans?"'³² He states, 'They see me here [*with the Kikuyu*] every day, and so they thought "this guy is planning something for us." So I decided to join them. I had a panga and I was with them. I was with one group and we were going door to door, looting and breaking.' He continues on to suggest that he ended up taking a leading role in the action:

By that time, they were listening to me, I was like their commander, I was in charge. // Then we went to that base down there and boys were drinking, and even me, I was drinking. We were giving ourselves that morale and I didn't want them to know that I wasn't with them (JAK, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 20 May 2010).

Thus, JAK's participation in violence was largely prompted by a concern that his loyalty to the community was in doubt, and he consequently sought to negate this perception through concrete and incontrovertibly ethnicised behaviour. However, in addition to these rebukes, implicit threats, and deep-seated fears of reprisal for non-conformity, more explicit and violent disciplining of the community was employed in order to ensure participation in

³² Indeed, the suspicion that people were spies for the opposing community was a significant source of tension during the crisis. It contributed to the intra-ethnic policing and to the prevention of inter-ethnic communication and co-operation. An interviewee in Huruma, who wanted to check on the safety of his Luo and Luhya neighbours who had fled to the neighbouring Kalenjin village, recalls that fellow residents told him, 'No. You are not supposed to do that. You are a spy taking information from here to there. Go back or we will kill you' (BS, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 30 January 2010). This anecdote also highlights the fact that pre-existing social ties often prompt a transcension of the macro-ethnic cleavage; this is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

violence and curtail any resistance. Many residents explain that ‘you had to join because they were coming house to house’ (MS, Interview, Waithaka, 8 March 2010) and, ‘if you refuse they will say that you are not a man, and they will beat you, sometimes to death’ (SO, Interview, Ronda, Nakuru, 10 June 2010). As one interviewee exclaimed, ‘If anyone refused to join us then he is not one of us because we were fighting for our rights, so if you don’t join us, then we will mug you’ (FO, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 8 May 2010). Fears of violent reprisals were certainly not unfounded and the use of coercion in mobilising the local community accounts for some participation.

Thus, ethnicised spaces experienced more immediate and more intense violence for three key reasons: the strong discourses of territorial ownership and belonging which underscore residency in the area; the deeply embedded components of the ethnic habitus and the visibility of ethnicised action; and the violent intra-community policing which took place. Conversely, ethnically mixed zones are not underpinned by the same dynamics and discourses; longstanding social ties, sentiments of common interest and mutual belonging in the area engendered a more united environment where inter-ethnic co-operation was predominant. That is not to say that residents of ethnically mixed areas did not involve themselves in the violence; indeed, many did. Groups of friends from these areas, for example, would form gangs in order to loot, rob, steal and generally take advantage of the chaos. As a Nubian youth from Makina states:

In this area the boys formed a group, we formed a group and then you would give your group a name. Like here, our group was called ‘Pentagon’, there was also ‘Al Qaeda’, ‘Gaza’, so you would organise a group and walk together. Here people don’t have money so it was a chance for the youths. We as ‘pentagon’, we used to move around, “Today, let’s walk around Makina” and anyone you found you would take their money and their phone, loot shops. Youths from this area, we know each other, so we united going up to places like Ngong Road and then coming back to the slum, we used to run up to areas around Kenyatta hospital, stealing, and then the police would chase us back. // The youths of this area we formed a group, the pentagon members, if you touched one of us then we would go for revenge, but mainly we were looting. We were all mixed up, here we were mixed up tribes, like our group up there,

the moment we know you stayed together we wouldn't turn on you (HASS, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 15 December 2009).

Nevertheless, violent incidents within these territories, and between the ethnically diverse residents, were extremely rare.

The Flexibility of Animosity and Transcending the Macro-Ethnic Divide

The macro-level perspectives of ethnic conflict that dominate the literature have a tendency to focus upon the hardening of ethnic boundaries during violence and upon the increasing salience of ethnicity at the expense of other cross-cutting identities. Amartya Sen has suggested that 'the art of constructing hatred' lies in the ability to invoke 'the magical power of some allegedly predominant identity that drowns other affiliations' (2006: xv), and that 'violence is fomented by the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people' (2006: 2). Whilst extreme in its phraseology, this reflects a sentiment underpinning a significant stream of the literature. However, as Fujii (2009a: 187) has pointed out, we should caution against 'assumptions that state-sponsored forms of ethnicity automatically overtake or deactivate all other forms of identity.' Moreover, the often implicit treatment of ethnic groups as unitary actors in conflict fails to appreciate the significant variations in inter-ethnic relations across space; animosity is far more flexible and susceptible to local dynamics than is allowed for by the macro-level perspective. Indeed, a close examination of conflict dynamics at the local level indicates that the nature of inter-ethnic relations varies across the spatial and temporal dimensions of violence. There is significant resistance to the macro-ethnic cleavage and a continuous reframing of the friend/enemy dichotomy, as individuals transcend the politico-ethnic divide by protecting, assisting, cooperating, collaborating and enacting violence with members of 'rival' communities. This section not only explores the moments

when, but also the ways in which, the macro-ethnic cleavage is moulded, resisted and transcended by local level actors.

In addition to the spatial variations in the levels and intensity of violence already discussed, there are marked differences in the location of the boundaries of animosity at the local level. That is to say that the conceptualisation of communities as welcome or, at the very least, accepted guests in ethnicised spaces, was not uniform and the macro-cleavage of ‘forty-one-against-one’ was subject to significant realignments and reconfigurations following the outbreak of violence. Whilst residents of one Kikuyu-dominated village might be unwilling to allow members of the Luhya community to remain in their area, for example, unquestionably identifying them as rivals and enemies, residents of another neighbourhood might perceive them to be allies and potential recruits in the battle against a more dangerous, common external enemy. Similarly, whilst the Kisii might be cast as bad guests by ODM-affiliated communities in one area, as immigrants who ‘have come to affect the haven, the stillness of our land’ (IS, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 2 February 2010) and who consequently must be evicted, in another area they are identified as part of a brotherhood of Western communities, partners in the fight against the arrogant Kikuyu. In this way, different levels of identity affiliation can be emphasised or de-emphasised to rationalise the relationship. So, in the latter case for example, the boundary of ‘Kisii’ can be downplayed in favour of ‘Western communities’; in another example, the supra-ethnic affiliation of ‘Nilots’ was frequently invoked in 2007-2008 to solidify the Luo-Kalenjin alliance. However, while some scholars would point to this as evidence of shifting identity boundaries, I do not understand it in this way. Even when recognised as our ‘Western brothers’, the Kisii continue to be identified as ‘Kisii’; the boundary does not change, and the awareness that they are in some way ‘not the same as us’ persists. Similarly, the boundary between the Luo and the Kalenjin remains significant even when subsumed under the ‘Nilot’ label. For example, one

interviewee points to the continued awareness of ethnic difference between the Luo and the Kalenjin during the post-election crisis, explaining that there were disagreements between the communities as they launched attacks against the Kikuyu, ‘because our cultures are different’³³ (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010). Ethnic *boundaries* are not infinitely flexible and mutable, and people do not ‘switch’ identities; rather ethnicities are nested within other identity boundaries. Claire Médard’s (2009: 368) analogy of Russian dolls is particularly helpful here. Each doll – each identity – is unique and clearly identifiable and each maintains its own boundedness, even when nested within others. This stickiness of ethnic identity is, in fact, what facilitates the ease and speed with which communities can be included within, or excluded from, ‘in-group’ status, and enables the flexibility of the friend/enemy dichotomy. During the post-election violence in Kawangware, for example, the Luhya were unequivocally associated with the Luo and with ODM, and as such were an unproblematic target of Kikuyu attack; in Langas, Eldoret, on the other hand, they were largely accepted as legitimate recruits in the battle against the neighbouring Luo and Kalenjin communities:³⁴

Me, I was living in a Kikuyu house, the plot belonged to a Kikuyu. When the Kikuyu came they found us, and those boys don’t have any problem with us. But they say, “If you’re a Luo or a Luhya stand to the side. If they find that you are a Luo they will circumcise you. So we said that we better unite with them, we’re Luhya, so we went with the Kikuyu. So when things go like that they said that we must walk with them at night. At night, if they found a Luo they would circumcise them and kill them. We see that it is not good because us, we’re Luhya and they could turn on us at any second because we are not of their tribe. We’re Luhyas. So we snuck away. In that group with the Kikuyus, there were three of us. One of us was a Luo, but he knows how to speak Luhya, so we hid him with us. When we went back to our area we met a group of Kikuyus – they asked us what tribe we were. We said that we were Luhyas. They said “Prove for us that you are Luhya, Remove your trousers” and then when we did that they saw that two of us were Luhyas, because we were circumcised, but one, they

³³ The disagreements arose over the issue of looting. WIL suggests, and several other interviewees and friends agreed, that ‘in Kalenjin [culture] it is taboo.’ Thus, WIL claims that while the Luo were engaging in looting activities, the Kalenjin were primarily burning houses and chasing the Kikuyu.

³⁴ The Bukusu sub-group were largely perceived to be PNU supporters, whilst other communities in the Luhya grouping were perceived to be affiliated with ODM. This ambiguity facilitated their acceptance on both sides during the violence.

found was a Luo. So they took the Luo and they removed his head (KNB, Interview with group of youths, Langas, Eldoret, 17 January 2010).

Similarly, whilst the violence in Kibera was dominated by Luo-Kikuyu animosity, in Huruma members of these two communities united to protect their properties and defend the village. Interviewees state that, 'at the time of problem you must fight those coming to attack, so they [*the youth of the area*] put politics aside' (P, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 28 January 2010). Residents of Huruma, then, identifying a common external enemy in the Kalenjin, shifted the boundaries of animosity, and communities elsewhere defined as enemies were perceived as allies in the local struggle for survival. However, it is interesting to note that in both of these examples, there is an underlying sentiment of 'more acceptable' or peripheral communities, and 'less acceptable' groups. Notice in the case of Langas, for example, that while the Luhya are tolerated by the Kikuyu community, they are, to an extent, still regarded with some suspicion; they are separated from the Kikuyu and asked to 'stand to one side' with the Luo, in recognition of their similar political affiliations; they are situated on the peripheries of the boundary of animosity. Indeed, the interviewee expresses his acute awareness of his precarious position when he admits that he was afraid that the Kikuyu could turn on him at any moment. Similarly, in the case of Huruma a few interviewees insisted that 'the Luo // were not here at all. We realised that we can't put a Luo here because he can easily fight us' (JMW, Interview, Huruma, Eldoret, 3 February 2010). Here then, the Luo, identified as loyal ODM supporters, were the subject of fierce intra-community debate, tolerated by some residents, but certainly not so readily accepted as other communities in the area, such as the Kisii and the Kamba. Indeed, an interviewee from Nakuru draws stark attention to this uncertainty surrounding the status of relations between some communities when he states:

Here, like the Luos, we chased them and some of them we killed them. The Luhya were the lucky ones in that time because if a Kikuyu and a Luhya met then it was 50/50, they can kill you or let you go, the same if a Kalenjin found a Luhya, but the tribe that we had no mercy for was the Luo. The war was between three tribes the

Luo, Kalenjin and Kikuyu, so the Kikuyu living in Kalenjin areas had trouble. The Luos used to hide themselves if they were in Kikuyu territory, they had a problem in that time (SBS, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 5 June 2010).

Inter-ethnic animosity can also fluctuate over time, and ongoing events can very quickly shift the boundary, leaving previously acceptable or peripheral communities, indisputably on the other side of the divide. For example, interviewees in Langas suggest that the Kisii were initially on the side of the ODM-affiliated communities in the area, stating that after the announcement, ‘the Luos, the Luhyas, the Kalenjin, and the Kisiis, they’re in Kisumu Ndogo, they were crying // so the people in Kisumu Ndogo decided to throw stones’ (P, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 12 January 2010). However, following the death of a Kalenjin MP, David Too, at the hands of a Kisii policeman, ‘It affected the estate, so it brought a problem to the Kisii. The Nandi’s were saying “you have to move”’ (S, Interview, Langas, Eldoret, 14 January 2010). Similarly, as reports of violent attacks across the country spread, previously accepted communities could quickly become legitimate targets:

The chaos was everywhere, you would hear that your tribe has been chased away from places and they are being beaten by this and this tribe, so then you get angry and you don’t want to see that tribe that is fighting your tribe. If you see one of them, you just start with them. Someone in that area that you are, if he doesn’t belong to your tribe and they’re the ones fighting you, never mind whether it is daytime or night-time, you will cut him with a machete (AZ, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 6 June 2010).

In addition, the cooperation of ‘rival’ communities in some cases is only a momentary alliance to achieve a particular goal. For example, a Kikuyu interviewee from Kenya service recalls that at the height of the crisis the youth of his village saw a group from neighbouring Munyaka launch an attack on the home of a Kalenjin councillor. The youth of Kenya service went on a rescue mission:

BH: We fought those people to chase them because we know the next place will be this area. We got a support of Kalenjin to help us chase the Kikuyu, they had arrows and from there we managed it. The Kalenjin of this area told those others that “The Kikuyu here, we have no hatred with them and they’ve helped us a lot, so they have to stay.” // They had no problem with us because they saw us help them to chase the Kikuyu. //

S: *And has it caused tensions between you and the other Kikuyu up there in Munyaka for joining the Nandis?*

BH: They didn't know that we were Kikuyu

(BH, Interview, Kenya Service, Eldoret, 12 February 2010)

Indeed, this quote distinctly highlights the ways in which a macro-level perspective of violence can mask the extent of inter-ethnic cooperation on the ground, and the localised negotiations of ethnic relations. Ethnic hatred is not simply constructed from above, certain to resonate consistently across time and space, but rather it is tempered, moulded, and influenced by localised dynamics. Thus, the clear politico-ethnic divide which dominates the macro-perspective is challenged by local level actors as they seek to protect themselves and their livelihoods.

In addition to these localised processes that shape the construction and negotiation of the boundaries of animosity and the conceptualisation of friends and enemies, individual actors often resist ethnic cleavages, transcending ethnic identifications in order to protect friends and neighbours. While mutual interest, such as the protection of homes and properties can facilitate inter-ethnic cooperation, it is longstanding social ties which appear to be the most influential in engendering resistance to the ethnic divide. The vast majority of my interviewees expressed the notion that, 'I can't hurt my friend' (B, Interview, Kobiwo, Kawangware, 1 March 2010), that 'We can't beat them because we grew up with them and we work with them' (MW, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 5 June 2010), that 'Most of us have grown together and we were born here and we've helped each other since then, it's turned to be a brotherhood' (P, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 22 March 2010) and that, 'they're good friends so nothing can happen here' (K, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 19 May 2010). Consequently, neighbours in ethnically mixed residential plots often united to defend their homes and properties in the area, and to protect each other from harm. As one interviewee states:

It was a plot of thirty houses and all of the neighbours came together and they said that “there is no day that we have crossed with each other, so we will protect ourselves in all ways. If the Kikuyu come to the plot looking for the Luo then the Kikuyu living here will go out and talk to them and if it is ODM then the Luos will go out and talk to them to save the Kikuyu living there” (LF, Interview, Pondamali, Nakuru, 22 June 2010).

Similarly, neighbours of minorities living within ethnicised spaces often assisted their friends by hiding them or by helping them to escape the area. A Kikuyu lady living in Waithaka told me that, ‘I rescued my Luo neighbour and I hid her in my house. They came to my door and I told them, “We’re all Kikuyu here, you can come in and see” (MIN, Interview, Waithaka, 9 March 2010). Similarly, a Kikuyu youth in Kaptembwa explained that his Kalenjin friend hid him in his house when the violence erupted:

That man used to own a plot near Kwa Chief and I was just inside the house, so he said, “Stay inside” while he would go out and look for food, even if there was a war he would say “You relax” and then he would go outside the gate watching (HP, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 15 June 2010).

Indeed, even the most enthusiastic and active participants in the violence engaged in some acts that transcended the ethnic divide.³⁵ People were not blinded to their pre-existing social ties and relationships, and throughout the violence individuals sought to assist their friends, relatives and neighbours by whatever means possible. However, whilst in ethnically mixed areas this resistance to the macro-ethnic divide is transparent and openly acknowledged, in ethnicised spaces, where helping or collaborating with other communities could be severely and brutally punished, residents had to employ more covert, subtle and concealed strategies to transcend the ethnic divide and assist their friends and neighbours.

In Chapter Three I drew attention to the various markers and social cues that inform the process of ethnic categorisation in Kenya. These same cues informed the targeting of victims during the violence and as Horowitz (2001: 126) points out ‘in doubtful cases, the

³⁵ There are, of course, exceptions to this and some interviewees suggest that ‘when the violence started there were no friendships now. You’re fighting for your tribe, and me, I’m fighting because I have to have my life’ (B, Interview, Satellite, Kawangware, 5 March 2010). However, these seem to constitute a minority.

crowd is often given extraordinary opportunities to interrogate, disrobe, and otherwise force the identifying cues from potential victims.’ Groups of youth used appearance, language, accent, names, and other such criteria to identify their targets. However, at the same time, local level actors manipulated these cues in their efforts to protect friends and neighbours consequently minimising the risks of doing so. For example, in Shabab, Kikuyu interviewees explained that two of their close friends who work with them in the matatu industry, one a Luo, the other a Kalenjin, remained with them throughout the violence, even when the Mungiki presence increased in the town. In an effort to hide their ethnic identity, they assigned them Kikuyu names; one interviewee states ‘we were friends from before, // so we gave them Kikuyu names’ (MW, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 5 June 2010) and his Kalenjin friend confirms that, ‘In that time my friends instead of calling me *K.* which is a Nandi word, they called me Bobo because the Mungiki were here, so they called me that so that they wouldn’t know that I was a Nandi’ (KP, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 4 June 2010). Similarly, a Kikuyu youth in Mathare – who states that during the violence, ‘I was safer on the Luo side because I’m dark skinned’³⁶ – recalls that one afternoon he was walking around the area with some friends when they were approached by a group of youths, one of whom he knew from school:

Before we left school me and that boy, we had a fight, so we were somehow enemies, so when he saw me he called my name, and my name is purely Kikuyu, if you hear it you just know that I am a Kikuyu, so all the attention turned towards me. There were four boys and they were tall, but with muscles, and they came to me and asked me, “Are you a Kikuyu” and they asked me in Luo. So I stammered, because I don’t know Luo. So the ones we were with, one of them was a Luo, and he spoke to them in Luo and he said, “No. We live here and we are all Luo, but he has lived in the city and he does not know Luo very well. N., that is a nickname we have for him because of his girlfriend” (BTS, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 14 April 2010).³⁷

³⁶ BTS does not speak any Kikuyu, and as such was afraid that given his appearance he would be unable to convince any Kikuyu in the area who did not know him of his ethnic identity.

³⁷ This story also points to the presence of personal score settling in the violence.

Thus, while BTS indicates that his dark skin initially identified him as a Luo to the group, upon hearing a Kikuyu name directed towards him, they sought to confirm their assumption. BTS's friends convinced their attackers that his Kikuyu name was a joking reference to his involvement with a Kikuyu lady and that his inability to speak *jaluo* was the result of an urban upbringing. In a similar way ethnically mixed defence groups in frontier zones and at borderlines used linguistic signals and signs which deliberately masked the diversity of their ethnic composition. For example, a resident of Gatina explains that:

We shouted "*Muliho*" and if you shouted "*Tuliho*" we know you're one of us, or you're a defence group that is working with us. If not, then you're an enemy. That is a Luhya phrase and everyone knows that we Luhya here are the majority, so the Kikuyu in our group used the same phrase so everyone just knew, "He's a Luhya" (P, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 22 March 2010).

Horowitz (1985: 48) has identified similar practices in contexts as diverse as Nigeria, Cambodia, and India. Thus, local level actors exploited the process of telling which underpins social relations in Kenyan society in an effort to mislead potential attackers and to protect their friends and neighbours.

Nevertheless, often this was not a feasible tactic. As Fearon (1999) has pointed out, 'common markers of ethnicity... can be difficult or impossible for an individual to misrepresent' and other tactics had to be employed in these cases. JAK, for example, states that 'they will just know from my accent that I am not a Kikuyu' (JAK, Interview, Nigeria, Mathare, 20 May 2010). Thus, more often local level actors hid their friends and neighbours from rival ethnic groups. A Kikuyu youth living in Weigh Bridge near Maili Nne recalls that Kalenjin warriors attacked his village on the day of the announcement. He states:

They had residential people here telling them this place belongs to so and so, here is a Kikuyu, there is a Kikuyu. Not all of them are burned, because some Kalenjins used to stay with us on our plot and they helped me. In that plot there is one Luo, me and a Nandi. They told me that just because of my face, even if I tried to hide my identity, they'll know from my face that I am a Kikuyu. They put me in their house. The first group passed here. The second group came, and they said "We know that this plot is for a Kikuyu" so they hid me again (T, Interview, Eldoret Town, 20 January 2010).

The potential dangers of hiding friends from other communities were extremely high; as such, protection in these areas had to be covert. As one interviewee states, ‘We used to be with them, but secretly, so the outsiders won’t know them, because if they find out that they’re Kikuyu they will kill all of us’ (GB, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 20 June 2010). Indeed, even in frontier zones there were concerns that not only could they be caught by ‘outsiders,’ by the various groups patrolling the area, but also that, ‘maybe there was a traitor among us’ (DC, Interview, Bombolulu, Kibera, 10 December 2009). Thus, while some took great risks to hide their neighbours and friends, many others assisted them in other less risky ways. For example, Kikuyu residents of Waithaka claim that they told their Luo neighbours to leave the area, but ‘we took their things and we kept them in our houses and we agreed that they would go to Kibera so that these guys don’t come and kill them. I felt for them. Imagine you have to leave your house!’ (W, Interview, Waithaka, 11 March 2010). Similarly, in Kibera members of the Luo community moved into the properties of their Kikuyu neighbours in order to prevent their co-ethnics from burning, looting or appropriating them. As one interviewee states it was, ‘so that when others in their community come, they see their fellow tribesman. That is how our houses were saved’ (SI, Interview, Kianda, Kibera, 12 December 2009). A young Luo man, who is the manager of a local football team in Kibera, states:

My players were protecting other Kikuyu players’ houses. Me, I knew this older guy and when he was leaving, he left us the houses, saying “I trust you, despite that you are of the other tribe”, so when they [*the Luo attackers*] came here I told them that I was the landlord of this house (E, Interview, Soweto, Kibera, 14 December 2009).

The protection of ethnic others in defiance of the macro-ethnic divide has been identified in other contexts, with the case of Rwanda offering perhaps the most poignant example. However, these analyses often identify such protectors as consistently ‘non-participants’ and they draw a sharp distinction between them and those who willingly carried out acts of violence. As Fujii (2009a: 8) states, ‘analysts generally rely on the categories “perpetrator,”

“victim,” “bystander,” and “rescuer.” Membership in these categories is assumed to be exclusive and stable.’ However, just as in Fujii’s study, my own research indicates that this is seldom the case; local level actors can be enthusiastic and active participants in ethnicised forms of violence, whilst simultaneously crossing the ethnic divide by protecting or assisting friends. One Kikuyu interviewee in Mathare, for example, explains that his Luo friend allowed him to hide in his home whilst he went out looting and participating in chaos (CR, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 29 April 2010). Similarly, a Kalenjin youth who took a leading role in a large scale attack in Nakuru still displayed concern for his friend who was caught inside one of the buildings:

There is a friend of mine, who was one who brought the Kalenjin to White Rock³⁸ and he told them to burn it. At the time he called out to me, “ND, get out of there we are going to burn it!” I didn’t know who it was because they had painted their faces, but my friends told me, “It seems they know you, go and talk to them” but I said that I couldn’t because I don’t know who that person is. After the war the guy came and we met and he said, “Do you remember that day I told you to come out of there, that you would be killed?” So I knew that it was him (ND, Interview, Ronda, Nakuru, 9 June 2010).

The fact that ND’s friends suggested that he go outside and speak to the Kalenjin when they thought that he might know them is further illustrative of the general expectation that friends would not attack each other. Another Kalenjin youth from Kaptembwa, who openly admits to brutally punishing members of his own community for not participating in violence against the Kikuyu,³⁹ still made concessions for those whom he knew, at one point pleading with the crowd, ‘Please don’t kill them. I schooled with them.’ He claims that because he is well known in the area, ‘those Kikuyu were let go’ (GB, Interview, Kaptembwa, Nakuru, 20 June

³⁸ White Rock is the name of a butchery, but the name appears to be used as a general reference to the area, which houses a number of Kikuyu businesses.

³⁹ He claims that he was part of the group which patrolled the area forcing people to come out and fight, and states that when they found men who were avoiding the battle, ‘we tortured them so that they couldn’t move. We would tie their hands underneath their legs and they would remain like that until morning and we gave them a lot of beatings.’

2010).⁴⁰ Even in the midst of the attack on Kiambaa, one of the most vicious and brutal incidents of the post-election violence, there is evidence to suggest that attackers were not blinded to pre-existing social ties. One interviewee explains that a Kalenjin youth with whom he had attended school was among the assailants. While he was an active participant in the attack, he reacted somewhat differently when he came face to face with his former school mate's mother:

I left Kiambaa because of what they did to my mother. They burned her in the church and they took everything she had.⁴¹ // They beat her in the leg and the person that was doing all this was my deskmate. How can he do it when he was my classmate? He took her mobile phone and her title deed, her money, her ID and he told her to go and not to turn back. After about ten metres, she heard someone call her and when she looked back he was calling her to come. She was half dead, so she told him, "I've known you for many years." The man told her that they would take the phone and the money, but they would give her the title deeds and her ID, "because we know you" (MW, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret, 20 January 2010).

Thus, participation in such acts of intimate violence, that is where the attackers have significant social ties with their victims, is difficult, and many interviewees expressed their hesitation in hurting people they knew well. As one youth in Kawangware states, 'We didn't confront each other, we avoided each other because I can't hurt my friend' (B, Interview, Kobi, Kawangware, 1 March 2010). Furthermore, friends from neighbouring enclaves, who found themselves on opposing sides of the local battlefields transcended the ethnic divide by secretly communicating and warning each other of impending attacks. A Kikuyu resident of Munyaka, for example, explains that 'some Kalenjin are very good, who have friends here. They'd call and say, "Be alert, my people are coming" they even told us the day that the Kalenjin would come' (AF, Interview, Munyaka, Eldoret, 18 February 2010); and in Nakuru a Kalenjin youth states:

⁴⁰ Though given his methods of disciplining fellow tribesmen for not participating in the violence, it is perhaps unsurprising that no one in the crowd challenged him on this!

⁴¹ Of the estimated thirty-five people who were trapped in the church, seventeen were killed. Most of these people died in the fire, but some who managed to escape through the doors of the church were hacked to death by the Kalenjin waiting outside. Others were more fortunate and managed to escape and flee from the village.

You know that first time in the meeting⁴² you are told to cut communication because this isn't friendship now, this is about community. But you can't sit there knowing your friend is there, so you have to call him. Like there was a time, we were going to come, so I called him and told him, "We're coming in like five minutes", it got cancelled though. I was calling him saying "Not yet, not yet." He thought I was playing with him! (WIL, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 2 June 2010).

Indeed, some interviewees suggest that even in the most highly organised revenge attacks led by Mungiki, the warning of friends was pervasive, and to a degree, accepted:

When the Mungiki came we grouped ourselves, some of us went to Mwariki, some to Githima and others were with us here in Weavers. They told us, "If you have any Luo friends who are not bad, then tell them to leave this place because we will leave nothing." In the night we entered every house where the Luo lived and told them "Gather your things and gather your family and we will take you to a safe place, because the Mungiki have already arrived and in the morning things will be very bad here in Ronda, and we don't want you to say after the violence that we caused you the problems, that we set you up. So we will take you to Kaptembwa" (ND, Interview, Ronda, Nakuru, 9 June 2010).⁴³

While pre-existing friendly and affable relationships can encourage people to transcend the macro-ethnic divide, personal grudges and antagonistic relations conversely prompt people to take advantage of the narrative of 'enmity' to settle personal scores. Kalyvas (2003: 475) has argued that 'actions "on the ground" often seem more related to local or private issues', and there was certainly a substantial element of this in the Kenyan post-election violence. A Nubian youth, for example, explains, 'If I have a mere grudge with you // I would come and find you' (HASS, Interview, Makina, Kibera, 15 December 2009), a resident of 4B confirms that 'maybe if someone has a grudge with you, he'll take advantage in that time,' and in Eldoret, a Kikuyu youth states that 'if you had a grudge with the friend, the friend would show the house to those who came to attack. If you don't have a grudge,

⁴² He is referring to one of the meetings organised by the Kalenjin elders in Kaptembwa.

⁴³ This tolerance of the Luo community is related to the flexibility of animosity in inter-ethnic relations across space, and the notion of 'more acceptable' and 'less acceptable' communities. Issuing similar warnings to members of the Kalenjin community was not acceptable. Indeed, MK, the friend with whom WIL was communicating during the violence, affirms that had the Mungiki caught him telling WIL the community's plans he would have been in serious trouble (MK, Interview, Shabab, Nakuru, 3 June 2010).

they'll protect the house' (BD, Interview, Munyaka, Eldoret, 17 February 2010). Indeed, an exchange between a group of youths in Kibera is particularly illustrative of this dynamic:

T (Luo): But it really depends on how you stayed with someone in Kibera.

Everyone nods their head in agreement

M (Luhya): Yes, you know there was a man here. He had a very bad heart with people here. He was a Kikuyu, and he was having a water tap. He refused to give water to others. // It depends on how you are living with... [*he directs a question to W.*] W, that Kikuyu, he was an uncle?... was he an uncle?

W (Kikuyu): A cousin

M: He was a cousin to W. He was not a role model to the community, when he is having a shop, and another one on the road! He had a tap there. If you had lunch in the house and you took water from his tap he'll beat you up. So people remembered what he was like. And when the violence came it was, "Let's go and attack him."

T: His shop was the first to be looted.

M: The main targets were the ones who had not been living well with us. He was a PNU supporter. But you know, when I was circumcised W was like my father. He was looking after me. So I couldn't carry a panga for him.

T: And you know, nobody chased W away. He left.

W: Yeah. They didn't chase me. But some people from outside could come and get me. These people...

M: It is like the lady of that man.

S [Interviewer]: Which man? The one with the tap?

M: Yeah that man. The lady of that man was a good woman. She would help people with *unga* and things. So when the people from Gatuikera came to burn the houses, we, under risk, we helped her. We did not help him. But we helped her against the people of Gatuikera.

(GWH, Group Interview, Kianda, Kibera 20 November 2009)

This exchange is illustrative of both the prominence of personal grudges in fuelling actions on the ground, as well as of the fact that resistance to the macro-ethnic divide is highly selective and dependent upon friendship and good neighbourliness.

Thus, throughout the violence local level actors, in certain circumstances and contexts resisted the macro-ethnic divide, even if only momentarily, to assist friends and neighbours. Nevertheless, the extent to which this was possible, and even the ways in which it could be done, were shaped and informed by socio-spatial dynamics. Whereas in ethnically mixed territories and micro-spaces it was open and transparent, in ethnicised spaces it was more often subtle and covert, because if 'they [other members of the community] found out, then your life will be in problem because you'll be a traitor' (ENG, Interview, Kaptembwa,

Nakuru, 16 June 2010). Indeed, individual agency is significantly constrained by ethnicised socio-spatial dynamics and many interviewees perceived resistance to the macro-ethnic divide to be impossible in such a severely polarised environment. One interviewee, for example states that, ‘There were those who did not want me to be chased, but they were few. They were saying not to burn my house. But those who wanted to chase me were many, so they could not keep me there’ (RC, Interview, Kosovo, Mathare, 17 April 2010). Similarly, a resident of Kiambaa reflects, ‘Our neighbours could not help us. They couldn’t manage because those people were many. Even if they wanted to help us they couldn’t because our neighbours here are few’ (M, Interview, Kiambaa, Eldoret, 18 January 2010). Often, in these circumstances, all that could be done was to tell minorities ‘to go and be safe’ because, ‘we don’t want to see you die and we might not be able to defend you’ (DC, Interview, Bombolulu, Kibera, 10 December 2009). As one interviewee recalls:

I am a Kikuyu and my wife is a Luo, she told me, “you are a Kikuyu and according to the neighbours it seems things will be bad and they won’t choose who will get the penalty. You have to go” (BS, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 30 April 2010).

Thus, what appears at first glance to be a violent displacement of minority communities, might be the very opposite: an attempt to protect friends and neighbours by the only means possible.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed exploration and view of violence from below, elucidating and explicating the processes of mobilisation and the dynamics of participation at the local level, highlighting the inherent ‘messiness’ of ethnic conflict on the ground. My research supports the emerging consensus amongst Kenyanist scholars that while undoubtedly some of the violence was planned, orchestrated, directed and funded from above, this offers only a partial explanation of the conflict, and at times can be misleading.

Spontaneous and more localised forms of mobilisation were also prominent features of the crisis. The chapter has examined how these bottom-up processes of organisation operated, arguing that local stakeholders and key figures in the community often played a leading role in formulating localised responses to the crisis and in directing and financing the violence. Simultaneously, the more impromptu, *ad hoc* plans that were made on street corners and in local youth bases blur the lines between spontaneity and organisation. As the violence took hold of the country social ties and networks became key conduits for mobilisation and incitement, often operating independently of elite direction. A Kikuyu market vendor in Laini Saba, Kibera, for example, recalls:

When the fight started, my cousin in Kiambu called and asked, “Can we come and help you?” When they hear that I had lost my job they got angry and they were thinking of joining in (PK, Interview, Laini Saba, Kibera, 4 January 2010).

Thus, elite-centric analyses that persist in the literature often fail to appreciate these micro-level processes and the agency of local level actors in mobilising and organising violence on the ground; consequently, they miss an important element of conflict. The 2007-2008 post-election violence was a complex infusion of ever-transforming dimensions of organised, planned and spontaneous acts, and as such both bottom-up and top-down aspects should be appreciated and explored.

The local-level perspective also reveals narratives that illuminate the logic of violent acts during conflict. In the Kenyan context, autochthonous discourses of belonging and exclusion and the immigrant-guest metaphor that underscores inter-ethnic relations in the country, significantly influenced the nature and dynamics of the violence. Rather than being fuelled by a widespread and pervasive desire to exterminate or kill particular communities, the Kenyan post-election crisis was framed by intentions of balkanisation, segregation and the politico-ethnic homogenisation of space. As such, the burning of minorities’ houses, the destruction of their businesses, and the appropriation of their properties and lands were

designed to prevent their return and to claim, or reclaim, dominance of 'our area' and the resources attached to it. The borders and boundaries of territories became increasingly reified and were actively policed, becoming the key battlegrounds of violence. Nevertheless, beneath this overarching framework of the conflict exists a multiplicity of more personalised concerns and private motivations fuelling participation and involvement that have been alluded to in this chapter. People are not singularly motivated, and while the aim of cleansing spaces of unwanted 'guests' certainly fuelled participation, so too did desires for revenge, personal score-settling, economic gain, pride, and in some cases, for a simple pleasure found in chaos. A youth in Muniyaka claims, for example, that, 'At that time people would say "I wish it would come again", it was something people were proud of' (AF, Interview, Muniyaka, Eldoret, 18 February 2010). Moreover, local level actors are not blinded to pre-existing social ties by the climate of ethnic conflict and enmity, and their actions during episodes of violence are equally influenced by the need to protect their spouses, family members, friends and neighbours. Individual involvement in ethnic violence is complex, ambiguous, and at times, contradictory.

Finally, this bottom-up perspective of the post-election violence has drawn attention to the flexibility and fluidity of the boundaries of animosity at the grassroots, demonstrating that they are neither stable nor coherent. The division between acceptable and unacceptable, friend and enemy, ally and rival, varies significantly across both time and space. Somewhat paradoxically, this volatility of inter-ethnic enmity and intolerance is made possible by the stability and stickiness of ethnic boundaries themselves. Whilst communities can be amalgamated within a broader label of categorisation, the persistent awareness of ethnic difference facilitates the ease and speed with which a group can be excluded from an allegiance and find themselves on the opposing side of the ethnic divide. Thus, while ethnic boundaries remain relatively stable in times of both peace and conflict, the nature of inter-

ethnic relations are in a continuous process of production and negotiation, and consequently, are highly contingent upon local contexts and changing circumstances.

Conclusion

This thesis began by telling two very different stories of the post-election crisis in Kenya: one of conflict and one of cooperation; one of division and one of unity; one of violence and one of peace. Such stark contrasts in experience and participation are not easily explained by the dominant top-down perspectives of ethnic violence. If political elites bear the responsibility for conflict through their manipulation of ethnic identities, their rhetoric of inter-ethnic hatred and animosity, and their incitement to violence, then we must address the question of why they succeed in some places and not in others. If the ethnic group becomes increasingly reified during times of acute tension and conflict, with its constituent members tending to act in support of the community – expressing its grievances, defending its interests and protecting its security in a uniform manner – then how do we explain why some members of supposedly rival groups ‘defect’ during conflict (Kalyvas 2008: 1043), and rather than engaging each other in battle, they unite and cooperate? Valuable as they are in laying out the macro-context of intergroup conflict, and in offering a partial explanation of some dimensions of violent action, existing theories leave much unexplained. More than this, they obscure the agency of local level actors and they oversimplify the nature of ethnic violence. This thesis has offered a view of violence from below, resituating local level actors in explanations of ethnic conflict and exploring their complex, ambiguous, and sometimes contradictory, involvement. Through a fine-grained, thick descriptive analysis, it has sought to reveal some of the patterns of, and to elucidate the logics behind, local level participation in the 2007-2008 Kenyan post-election violence. It has illustrated the strengths and the limitations of existing approaches, and identified localised processes of ethnic identification, mobilisation and participation in violence that could potentially speak to other cases. In this

concluding chapter I summarise the key arguments concerning the specificities of the Kenyan case, relating them back to the broader literature on ethnic conflict, before reflecting upon the potentially wider implications of the findings, and pointing to directions for future research.

The Macro-Level Context of the Kenyan Post-Election crisis

The dominant theories of ethnic conflict discussed in Chapter One have much to offer to an understanding of the Kenyan situation, and many of their key points have underscored, appeared in, and been interwoven throughout my own analysis. This section briefly reflects upon the key strands of thought laid out in the literature review, summarising the ways in which they help to explain the violent aftermath of the 2007 elections.

After presenting some of the findings of this research at a small conference in Cambridge, I went out to dinner with four Kenyans who had been in attendance. The lively conversation had long since moved on to other things when the waitress came over to take our order. Going round the table, she reached one of the Kenyans, who ordered a curry, at which point his friend loudly declared, ‘Hey, you didn’t see that they have fish? You are a Luo, and you’re choosing curry over fish?!’ prompting raucous laughter amongst all present. The waitress looked bemused. What this brief anecdote illustrates is the extent to which ethnic categorisation and differentiation is embedded within Kenyan consciousness. It is not inherently conflictual. It is not necessarily overt. Yet, it is a typical mode of thought that can become visible in an instant. The rich literature exploring the ‘invention of tradition’, the ‘imagination’ of ethnic communities, and the social construction of identities goes a long way to explaining the resilience and salience of ethnicity in Kenyan society and consciousness. As Lynch (2011: 18) has noted, Kenya’s colonial experience encouraged its citizens to ‘think and act ethnically’, and as has been discussed at length in Chapter Three, this tendency

persists in contemporary society. The question of ethnic categorisation emerges in everyday interactions with others through the process of telling, there is an acute awareness of the ethnic affiliations of neighbours, businesses, territories, institutions and other structures in society, and there is a strong tendency to interpret social and political events through the lens of ethnicity. This stickiness and relative stability of ethnic boundaries helps to explain the success of top-down mobilisation by political entrepreneurs. Elites can capitalise upon these salient macro-cleavages in a way that would be impossible in a different context where ethnic identity is not such a defining feature of society. Moreover, an appreciation of the extent to which ethnicity defines everyday life allows for a more balanced model of understanding ethnic conflict, where bottom-up processes of identification reinforce top-down mobilisation.

Bill Berkeley (2001: 35), in a strong articulation of the elite manipulation theory of ethnic conflict, writes that ‘all of Africa’s conflicts start at the top and spread downward. People hungry for power use violence as a means of achieving it. They use ethnicity to mobilize constituencies.’ While this thesis has been predominantly concerned with the local level processes of ethnic violence, and as such has not explored the motivations of political actors, it certainly supports the suggestion that elite manipulation played a significant role in some dimensions of the post-election violence in some places. Chapter Six has illustrated that politicians employed negative ethnic rhetoric and used inciting language during the campaigns, and Chapter Five has shown that many politicians hired youths, at least partially for the purposes of disrupting opposition rallies and intimidating opposition supporters.¹ Furthermore, Chapter Seven has pointed to the strong evidence that influential politicians planned, organised and directed specific attacks in the Rift Valley region, that others later mobilised vigilante groups – particularly Mungiki – in retaliation, and that lower level

¹ Though in 2007 these were often not akin to the ‘ethnic militias’ and centralised vigilante groups used in previous elections, but were rather more amorphous groups of youths.

political actors directly funded youths to continue causing chaos once the violence had erupted. Indeed, an alleged ODM document suggests that the exacerbation of ethnic tensions was a key campaign strategy of the party, designed ‘to discourage voter participation in hostile areas’, and it indicates that violence was being considered ‘as a last resort’ prior to the elections (Anon. 2007). Thus, political elites on both sides of the divide certainly had a significant role to play in the 2007-2008 post-election violence and the persistent tendency to focus upon their involvement is understandable and not wholly unjustified.

The arguments presented in Chapter Four resonate with grievance based explanations of ethnic violence, and particularly with the recent explosion of literature pointing to the significance of ‘horizontal inequalities.’ Persisting grievances regarding the socio-economic dominance of the Kikuyu in Kenya were exacerbated by the community’s simultaneous dominance of the political arena in the 2007 context (discussed in Chapters Four and Six), supporting arguments in the literature that the potential for violence is higher where groups are politically excluded as well as socio-economically disadvantaged. Chapter Six also briefly reflected upon the related issue of historical injustices, and while I have not delved into the evolution of these, I acknowledge their importance. I have suggested that perceptions of past persecution in the political arena, and of previous marginalisation in the distribution of resources under Kenyatta and Kibaki, provided fertile ground for the justification of contemporary animosities, exacerbated fears for the future, and facilitated the solidification of the ODM alliance against the Kikuyu. Moreover, I have argued that grievances are accentuated by the autochthonous discourses that pervade Kenyan society. The perception that the Kikuyu have been disproportionately advantaged in the allocation of land outside their own province, and that they have appropriated businesses, job opportunities and other resources that ‘belong’ to other communities, played a significant role in fuelling the violence. Undoubtedly, any account that does not appreciate the centrality of ethnic

grievances and resentments over issues of domination and subordination, superiority and inferiority, advantage and disadvantage – both in their material and socio-psychological dimensions – cannot hope to understand the Kenyan 2007-2008 violence.

Fear-based explanations of ethnic conflict have entered my analysis predominantly in relation to the neo-patrimonial nature of Kenyan politics and the perception of elections as winner-takes-all events. As such, in my findings these theories are intricately intertwined with the rational actor explanations that emphasise the centrality of ethnically structured patronage networks and the consequent economic incentives for following the ethnic leader. Chapter Five argued that at the higher levels of political competition, Kenyans expect better opportunities and improvements to their standards of living from a member of their own community being in power. That is, there is a strong sentiment that if ‘our man’ occupies the presidential seat – or at the very least if he is closely allied with whomever does – the community will get to eat from the national cake. At the same time, fears of marginalisation, discrimination and exclusion at the hands of others are pronounced, and there is a strong sense that elections are life and death matters. Thus, as Bratton and Kimenyi (2008: 279) have argued, Kenyans tend to vote defensively along ethnic lines, motivated by the ‘fear that their opponents will rely on formulae of ethnic exclusivity.’ In Chapter Six, I suggested that these hopes for future prosperity and fears of potential exclusion were particularly acute in 2007. Perceptions that Kibaki had betrayed the other communities of the NARC coalition since his election in 2002, and deliberately marginalised particular groups – notably the Luo and the Kalenjin – exacerbated fears of his continued rule. On the part of the Kikuyu, memories of marginalisation under Moi fed into fears of losing the seat again. Moreover, the pervasive discourses of *majimbo* that dominated the campaigns, with its negative connotations of ‘repatriation’, was seen as a threat to the community’s very existence outside of Central Province. Thus, while elections in Kenya are usually a struggle between

communities to put one of their own in power, the 2007 elections were marked by intense hopes and deep fears for the future. Consequently, when it was perceived that the elections had been rigged, these fears were combined with an acute sense of anger at being cheated out of 'our turn to rule,' triggering a violent reaction. As a young Luhya woman from Kawangware revealingly exclaims:

It made us fight. We fought for something genuine because the elections were stolen. It was not just a fight that was incited. It is our livelihood. If someone steals the elections, he's stealing my life, so I have to fight for it (AI, Interview, Gatina, Kawangware, 8 April 2010).

Thus, it is clear that these explanations go some way to developing an understanding of the Kenyan post-election crisis. However, this thesis has argued that none of them go far enough in their analysis, and the situation on the ground is far more complex and nuanced. The social construction of identities for example, is an ongoing process which is situated in the contours of everyday life; the processes and significance of this rather obvious point are seldom explicated or reflected upon sufficiently in reference to situations of ethnic violence. That is to say, constructivist insights are not incorporated consistently within explanations of conflict. Furthermore, while elites do play upon existing and persisting ethnic grievances and fears, and they certainly do use inciting and incendiary rhetoric for strategic political purposes, they are often reflecting rather than constructing grassroots discourses that are already in circulation. Indeed, this is the very reason that they are successful in some places. As Brubaker et al. (2006) have so persuasively demonstrated, elite rhetoric and appeals to particular identities can be interpreted very differently at the local level, and can just as easily be met with a dismissive roll of the eye and a sentiment of 'there he goes again' (2006: 4), as they can with widespread acceptance and fervour. Questions of receptivity must always be raised and this cannot be done at a high level of aggregation. Additionally, ethnic inequalities, discriminations, prejudices, resentments, fears and hatreds are not experienced,

enacted, expressed, or felt evenly over time and space, and the salience of those along a particular cleavage line is not stable. Temporal and spatial contexts can shift a persisting grievance into an acute one, and vice versa; violence itself can modify perceptions of which communities are a greater threat and should be more feared than others; and the conceptualisations of who constitutes a friend and who a rival, of who is more or less ‘acceptable’, can shift very quickly. Finally, rationalist perspectives of violence as intimately tied in with patronage politics and high stakes political competition *presume* rather than demonstrate or explain support for ethnic elites, masking the complexities of negotiation, intra-community debate and policing, and participation in violence on the ground. Consequently, a closer exploration of the local level dynamics is required.

The Micro-Level Dynamics of the Kenyan Post-Election Violence

There are two broad, overarching, and to an extent overlapping, areas of argumentation within the complexities of this thick description that can be identified as speaking to the central research question laid out at the start of this thesis. Firstly, while acknowledging that violence dynamics are peculiar to their local contexts, I have suggested that there was a relatively consistent socio-spatial pattern to the post-election violence in Kenya. I have argued that neighbourhoods, villages and territories dominated by one ethnic group – what I have termed ‘ethnicised’ spaces – experienced more immediate, more intense and more acute violence than ethnically mixed areas. The latter often remained relatively peaceful, or experienced a significant delay in the onset of violence, and witnessed far greater levels of cooperation between members of supposedly rival communities. Secondly, beneath these socio-structural dynamics are further complexities and ambiguities of individual agency, participation and involvement, where the macro-ethnic cleavage is debated,

negotiated, moulded, transcended and subverted according to local level contexts, individual relationships and immediate circumstance. This section draws out the key ideas related to each of these points that have been interwoven throughout the chapters of the thesis.

Socio-spatial variations

The reasons underscoring the socio-spatial variations in the post-election violence are multiple, overlapping, and complex, but there are four key elements that can be identified as significantly influencing the emergence of these dynamics. Firstly, as was discussed in Chapter Three, while ethnic categorisation and differentiation is a typical mode of thought in wider Kenyan society, and while the tendency to interpret everyday social and political events in ethnic terms is predominant, these processes are also coloured by, and produced through, lived experience. I have suggested that ethnic components of the habitus are embedded, maintained and reinforced through everyday enactments of ethnicity, both in banal and performative ways, and that these are more frequent and pervasive in ethnicised spaces. That is to say, that the disposition to act in an ethnically ‘acceptable’ way² is structured by, and in turn structuring of, everyday practice. Thus, in times of tension, transition or conflict, a significant number of residents within ethnicised spaces toe the ethnic line, sometimes with little conscious reflection. In Chapter Five, for example, I illustrated this point in relation to ethnic voting behaviour, suggesting that for some interviewees supporting the ethnic leader was ‘just a feeling’ they had, and part of the moral duty of being a member of the community. Others, while still pointing to the disposition to vote ethnically, expressed

²Ethnicised interpretations of events and conceptualisations of appropriate behaviour are, themselves, produced through the everyday interactions, conversations and debates at the local level. While this thesis has drawn attention to the potential for renegotiation of the friend/enemy dichotomy during violence – an issue which is returned to below – it has not explored the intra-community debates which serve to determine what constitutes the ‘right’ ethnic behaviour. For example, the processes through which a particular political candidate emerges as ‘acceptable’ to the community have not been explored in this thesis. This points to a potentially fruitful area of future research. An analysis of local level dynamics and contestations during the party nominations process, for example, could be revealing.

a greater awareness of the implicit pressure to behave in the ‘right’ way within ethnicised spaces, often emphasising the visibility of other group members’ actions as a significant contributory factor. Similarly, these dimensions can be extended to explain some levels of participation in violence in ethnicised spaces, as argued in Chapter Seven. Anger at the Kikuyu over the ‘rigged’ elections, and the subsequent fury over the violent actions being enacted upon ‘our community’ across the country, were produced, reinforced and legitimised through interaction with co-ethnics. The visibility of fellow tribesmen taking action in response to the crisis heightened the sense of ethnic commonality and invoked a sense of obligation to defend and protect the rights of the community. This disposition is disrupted in ethnically mixed territories, and the sense of duty to rise up in defence of the larger ethnic community is less well-embedded. It is not reinforced through everyday interactions and practices to the same extent in everyday life, and consequently is more easily transcended.

The second factor which played a significant role in shaping the spatial variations of the post-election crisis relates to the continuum of ethnic conflict identified in Chapter Three, and extended in Chapter Six. I have argued that large-scale ethnic violence must be understood as part of a continuum; its eruption does not mark a clear break from the social norm, but rather is an intensification and transformation of the logic of the everyday. A number of scholars have pointed to this in relation to the diffusion of violent activity in Kenyan society, and my own research supports this argument, illustrating that the normalisation of violence as a means of resolving social disputes and conflicts, to an extent, legitimised the widespread violent reaction to the ‘rigged’ elections. However, I have gone further than this and suggested that there is a continuum of *ethnically* conflictual behaviours in Kenyan society, in which ethnic prejudices, resentments, animosities and hatreds scatter everyday interaction in seemingly banal, but certainly not benign ways. They serve to produce and reinforce ethnicised notions of superiority, inferiority and difference, and they

maintain underlying ethnic tensions. However, there is a socio-spatial dimension to the expression of prejudice and resentment; while the overt employment of negative ethnicity is acceptable in ‘in-group’ settings, it is usually tempered when members of the abused community are present. Consequently, ethnicised spaces experience more overt and frequent articulations of prejudice, and there is a marked social silence regarding their use. In ethnically mixed settings, on the other hand, negative ethnicity, when expressed, is done so more subtly and often through the use of humour; when the boundaries of acceptability are perceived to have been violated, tensions are most often deflected and diffused through social cuing. The 2007 campaigns acted as a trigger for the movement along the continuum of ethnic conflict – both through top-down mobilisation, and bottom-up escalation processes – and the use of abusive language and insults became increasingly overt, pervasive and intense. Yet its employment was still shaped by socio-spatial dynamics. Hate speech and negative ethnicity employed by politicians found resonance in ethnicised areas, was frequently expressed and circulated by local level actors within these neighbourhoods, and not uncommonly led to low-scale incidents of violence. In ethnically mixed territories, however, the intensity and articulation of ethnic hatred remained more constrained, and while ethnicised jokes and biases were more overtly expressed than usual, and they led to the occasional argument, they seldom caused lasting tensions or descended into the use of violence. Thus, it is the very continuity between the everyday and the extraordinary that can help to explain why some areas experienced more acute levels of violence following the elections.

Thirdly, as has been alluded to throughout the thesis and discussed at length in Chapter Seven, embedded notions of ethnic territoriality and pervasive discourses of autochthony, both at the macro-regional level, and in the intra-urban arena, were central to the shaping of violence dynamics. The notion that ethnicised spaces belong to, and are owned

by, the dominant community, imposes a secondary citizenship status on ethnic others living in the area. They are understood to be 'guests' who have been allowed to stay on the condition that they abide by certain rules of hospitality, the most prominent of which is the expectation of acquiescence to the political wishes of the host community. Thus in 2007, the macro-political divide helped to cast different communities in the roles of 'good' guests and 'bad' guests at the local level and the violence can be understood in part as the retraction of hospitality to the latter. Guests who were perceived to have abused the generosity of their hosts, whether in the polls, or through their community's actions in the ensuing chaos, were violently evicted and chased to their own areas. Indeed, I have argued that the post-election crisis was more about asserting or reasserting dominance and control over space, and punishing opposing communities for their perceived transgressions and persistent abuses of hospitality, than it was about killing or eliminating them. Given this pervasive framework for violent action, it is perhaps unsurprising that ethnically mixed spaces, where this sense of ethnic territoriality, of ownership over space and of ethnically-determined citizenship rights is markedly absent, did not descend into the same levels or dynamics of chaos.

Finally, the socio-spatial patterns of violence can be partially explained by the greater capacity for intra-community policing within ethnicised spaces. While social structures can engender strong dispositions to act in a particular way, they certainly do not determine behaviour. As argued in Chapter Five, and highlighted in Chapter Seven, local level actors contest, dispute, negotiate, and seek to subvert expectations on their behaviour. In ethnically mixed territories, these debates over morally acceptable action are vibrant and there is sufficient space for them to thrive. Thus, during the campaigns, political discussions and debates were lively, often heated, but rarely violent. However, in ethnicised neighbourhoods, perceived transgressions and non-conformity to ethnic expectations were frequently policed and disciplined. Intra- and indeed inter- community political debate was stifled and

suppressed, sometimes violently. Thus the inherent risks in voicing opposition to the dominant narrative of the space served to silence alternative voices, and to constrain individual agency. 'Moral ethnicity' does not necessarily operate as a counter to political tribalism; indeed, in ethnicised spaces, it is often reinforcing of it. Moreover, as noted in Chapter Seven, violent reprisals for not participating in violence were pervasive in ethnicised spaces, and forced involvement accounts for a significant element of the violence in these areas. However, while ethnicised socio-spatial structures constrain individual agency, that is not to suggest that they obliterate it. While these social structures undoubtedly limit open political discussion and the articulation of alternative understandings of the social world, and while they certainly restrict the potentially liberating effects of unconstrained moral ethnicity, local level actors continue to contest and subvert the macro-ethnic cleavage, even if only covertly. It is this point which acts as a bridge between recognising the socio-spatial patterns of the post-election violence, and incorporating the complexities and ambiguities of individual action which operated beneath them.

The ambiguity and multi-vocality of the post-election violence

While the 'forty-one-against-one' rhetoric dominated the national scene of the 2007 elections, constructing a cleavage between the Kikuyu on the one side and other Kenyan communities on the other, the micro-level dynamics of the post-election violence illustrate a far messier and more ambiguous picture. Not only was the friend/enemy dichotomy debated and renegotiated by local level actors, and moulded to suit particular agendas and circumstances, but individuals frequently transcended the locally conceptualised ethnic divide to assist and protect friends, neighbours and others with whom they had a significant relationship. With regards to the reconfiguration of the friend/enemy dichotomy, Chapter Seven argued that local contexts and circumstances can render some communities 'more

acceptable' or 'more welcome' in 'our area' than others. For example, when faced with the threat of external attack by a large group of Kalenjin warriors, residents of Huruma estate in Eldoret renegotiated the Luo-Kikuyu enmity which defined the violence in other areas of the country, uniting with Luo residents in order to defend the village. The macro-ethnic cleavage was not stable across space, and while providing a loose framework for conceptualising inter-ethnic relations, it was inherently flexible and mutable. Furthermore, it has also been demonstrated that there was a temporal volatility to these localised friend/enemy relations, and a particular event, whether local or national, could quickly transform welcome guests to unwelcome occupiers and change former allies into fierce enemies. Thus, in Luo dominated 4B in Mathare, a number of interviewees suggested that in the first few days of the violence members of the Kamba community were more or less tolerated by ODM-affiliated groups in the area. While they were recognised as standing against Raila's candidacy,³ they had neither stood with Kibaki, nor indeed posed a significant threat to ODM. However, when Kalonzo Musyoka accepted the vice-presidency from Kibaki before the dispute over the elections had been settled, the Kamba were targeted and residents of 4B launched an attack on the nearby Kamba enclave of Number 10. Thus, there was an inherent, ever-shifting and transforming multi-vocality to the post-election violence, and it was not fought along stable cleavage lines.

Secondly, while the dominant perspective of ethnic violence implicitly suggests that other identities are largely deactivated during periods of ethnic conflict as identity boundaries harden and reify, in Chapter Seven I have demonstrated that this is not the case. Long-standing, cross-cutting ties and personal friendships across the locally configured ethnic divides prompted many of my interviewees to seek ways of protecting and assisting their

³ The Kamba were perceived to be split between ODM and ODM-Kenya. Charity Ngilu was a member of the ODM pentagon and Kalonzo Musyoka defected from the party to form ODM-Kenya. Arguably it is the fact that they had an influential politician within Raila's party that facilitated their conceptualisation as more or less acceptable by the Luo in 4B.

friends and neighbours. Indeed, even those who were otherwise fierce participants in ethnicised violence tended to make exceptions and concessions for those whom they knew well. While the means available to transcend the ethnic divide were often constrained by socio-spatial dynamics and had to be more covert in ethnicised spaces, it is apparent that ethnicity did not preclude all other forms of identification and relationships. Thus, individual participation in ethnic violence is not stable, and in fact is often contradictory. One Luo resident of 4B, Mathare offers an example of this tendency towards paradoxical behaviour. MUS's narrative indicates that he was a particularly active participant in the post-election violence and he explains that he was motivated by a deep anger towards the Kikuyu and a strong desire to punish them for stealing the elections. However, he also states:

Even me, my fiancé is a Kiuk, and I like her, she is sweet to me, I love this woman and that is a private thing of me. But say her brother is my enemy, I'll not take my anger against my wife, but I will take it on her brother. (MUS, Interview, 4B, Mathare, 29 April 2010).

Thus, local level dynamics of violence in Kenya following the 2007 elections were complex and ambiguous and illustrate a flexibility to macro-ethnic cleavages which is not often recognised in the literature.

Broader Implications and Future Research

While thick descriptive analyses are inherently specific to the particular situation they set out to elucidate, their findings can have implications which extend beyond the confines of that particular case. This project, while pointing to the need for further research which can offer a comparative perspective on the localised processes of identity construction and mobilisation to violence identified in this particular case, has broader implications concerning our understanding of the very nature of ethnic conflict itself. The dominant aerial view of ethnic violence, the persistent propensity to explain it as the result of elite mobilisation, and the current tendency to focus upon group grievances, fears, resentments, and sentiments of

injustice, all generate the illusion of homogenous ethnic groups waging battle against each other. By casting groups as unitary actors in conflict, existing theories suggest that violence is fought along consistent, fixed, stable and clearly defined cleavage lines. This analysis has illustrated the limitations of such an approach, suggesting that it is distorting to the point of being misleading. Ethnic violence at the grassroots is inherently messy; the friend/enemy dichotomy is constantly in the process of production and renegotiation, even during violence. There is a distinct multi-vocality to ethnic violence on the ground where local level actors mould macro-level discourses of enmity to suit their immediate localised contexts, and where individuals frequently transcend the ethnic divide to assist their friends and neighbours. There is no singularly understood and stable ethnic 'other' during violence; only multiple, fluctuating and transforming conceptualisations. Thus, ethnic violence is not a single conflict between 'groups' as unitary and homogeneous actors, but rather it is made up of multiple, transforming locally-ethnicised conflicts. As Brubaker (2004: 9-10) has noted:

Ethnic conflict... need not, and should not, be understood as conflict *between ethnic groups*, just as racial or racially framed conflict need not be understood as conflict between *racess*, or nationally framed conflict as conflict between *nations*.

Indeed, despite their 'constructivist' claims, by treating the ethnic group as a fixed entity during conflict, existing approaches do not incorporate constructivist insights consistently within their explanations of ethnic violence (Kalyvas 2008: 1044). This thesis has sought to contribute to the emerging literature which aims to reinvigorate constructivism in scholarly thinking about ethnicity and ethnic violence. As Fujii (2009a: 188) notes, 'generating a constructivist theory will require more local-level analyses that can trace the processes of violence that unfold in other parts of the world' and further research in this area is crucial. It is hoped that the research conducted for this thesis will make some small contribution to this broader project of developing nuanced, comprehensive, and ultimately more representative understandings of ethnic violence.

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